DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 321 904 PS 018 983

AUTHOR de Smet, James A.
TITLE Assisting Kindergarten through Fifth Grade Teachers To Improve Their Parent Conferencing Skills.
PUB DATE Apr 90
NOTE 115p.; Ed.D. Proposal, Nova University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Check Lists; *Communication Skills; Elementary Education; *Elementary School Teachers; *Interpersonal Competence; *Parent Teacher Conferences; *Teacher Improvement
IDENTIFIERS *Oregon

ABSTRACT

A speech pathologist designed and implemented a practicum study for the purpose of strengthening the conference skills of kindergarten through fifth-grade teachers at three elementary schools. The primary goal of the practicum was to provide the teachers with a method and the skills needed to promote effective cooperation between parent and teacher. A second goal was to help the teachers achieve a skill level at which they would feel comfortable during most teacher-parent conferences. Pre- and post-tests surveying teachers' perceptions of competence in seven areas were administered. Teachers were recruited to participate in the intervention. Orientation sessions for the teachers were planned and conducted. The program was supervised, maintained, and evaluated. Evaluation data suggested that the intervention was effective in improving teachers' social and communication skills. Appendices provide results of pre- and post-tests, measures employed, and other related materials. (RH)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☒ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED321904

# Assisting Kindergarten Through Fifth Grade Teachers To Improve Their Parent Conferencing Skills

by

James A. de Smet

Cluster XXIII

Proposal Presented to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

James A. de Smet

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

NOVA UNIVERSITY

APRIL, 1990

PS 018033

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

## PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

Verifier: Thomas Leahy

Thomas Leahy, M.S.

COORDINATOR, ACADEMICALLY TALENTED
Title

1350 Teakwood Ave., Coos Bay, OR97420
Address

April 25.1990
Date

This practicum report was submitted by James A. deSmet under the direction of the advisor listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

May 5, 1990
Date of Final Approval of Report

Dorothy Adams Peck
Dorothy Adams Peck, Ph.D.
Advisor

TABLE OF CONTENTS


| | |
|---|---|
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | iii |
| ABSTRACT | vi |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | vii |
| Chapter | Page |
| I. INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| Description of Community | 1 |
| Writer's Role, Responsibilities | 4 |
| II. STUDY OF THE PROBLEM | 7 |
| Problem Description | 7 |
| Problem Documentation | 10 |
| Causative Analysis | 11 |
| Related Literature | 13 |
| III. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS | 18 |
| Goals and Expectations | 18 |
| Behavioral Expectations & Measurement of Objectives | 19 |
| Plans for Analyzing Results | 22 |
| IV. SOLUTION STRATEGY | 24 |
| Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions | 24 |
| Description of Selected Solution | 27 |
| Calendar Plan | 61 |
| V . RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS | 64 |
| Summary | 64 |
| Results | 65 |
| Analysis and Interpretation | 80 |
| Recommendations | 86 |
| Dissemination | 86 |

REFERENCES 88

Appendices

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| A | ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE SUPERINTENDENT A.C.T.S. K-5 SURVEY | 92 |
| B | SURVEY RESULTS | 97 |
| C | CONFERENCE DAY PREPARATION FORM | 102 |
| D | PARENT INPUT FORM | 104 |
| E | ROADBLOCKS TO COMMUNICATION | 106 |
| F | CHECKLIST FOR COMMUNICATION SKILLS | 108 |
| G | TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS IN PAR. CONF. | 110 |
| H | OBSERVATION FEEDBACK FORM | 112 |
| I | TEACHER PRE-TEST RESULTS | 114 |
| J | TEACHER POST-TEST RESULTS | 116 |

LIST OF CHARTS


| CHARTS | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | PRECONFERENCE PLANNING SKILLS<br>PRE-& POST-TEST AVERAGE SCORES. | 68 |
| 2 | EFFECTIVE PARENT CONFERENCES<br>PRE-& POST-TEST AVERAGE SCORES. | 70 |
| 3 | AVOIDING ROADBLOCKS IN COMMUNICATION<br>PRE-& POST-TEST AVERAGE SCORES. | 72 |
| 4 | COPING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE<br>PRE-& POST-TEST AVERAGE SCORES. | 74 |
| 5 | FACILITATIVE COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES<br>PRE-& POST-TEST AVERAGE SCORES. | 76 |
| 6 | ADULT LEARNER CHARACTERISTICS<br>PRE-& POST-TEST AVERAGE SCORES. | 78 |
| 7 | CONFLICT RESOLUTION<br>PRE-& POST-TEST AVERAGE SCORES. | 81 |
| 8 | SUMMARY GRAPH..(TEACHER RESPONSES)<br>PRE-& POST-TEST AVERAGE SCORES. | 83 |

## ABSTRACT

Assisting Kindergarten Through Fifth Grade Teachers To Improve Their Parent Conferencing Skills. deSmet, James A., 1990: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: training/school personnel/ parent role/parent participation/parent-teacher cooperation/elementary education/parent-teacher conference skills.

This practicum was designed to expand and strengthen the existing teacher conferencing skills in elementary school. The primary goal was to provide the teacher with both the method and the skills necessary to promote real cooperation between parent and teacher. A second goal was to help the teachers achieve a skill level where they would feel comfortable at most teacher-parent conferences.

A needs assessment survey was administered to the teachers by the Education Service District. Parent-teacher conferencing rated high on the needs listed. The writer administered pre- and post-test surveying the teachers perceptions of competence in seven areas; recruited teachers to participate in the practicum program; planned and conducted orientation sessions for the teachers; supervised and maintained the program, and developed and administered an observation evaluation component.

The results of the practicum were positive. Analysis of the data revealed that this proved to be a positive learning experience for the teachers. Teachers indicated that the new skills helped them set up an atmosphere of collaboration and cooperation with the parents.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to acknowledge the one person without whom this practicum would never have been completed. Ann, my wife, gave me constant encouragement, numerous creative thoughts, ideas, and friendship. She also supplies me with the love necessary for me to choose to continue my growth.

To my children Maureen, Cathleen, and David who have allowed me to grow with them and share their lives. Thanks!

To Thomas Leahy, M.S., who collaborated with me fully on the subject of parent-teacher conferencing. I want to give you, Tom, my sincere thanks for your help, expertise, and most of all, your friendship.

I want to acknowledge my Father, Louis A. de Smet, who taught me to push for excellence and had the courage to wait for me to believe him.

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### Description of the Community

The city involved had a population of only sixteen thousand people. It was located on the Oregon coast at least one hundred miles from the California border. Travel to any city of major size in the state was a two and one half hour excursion at the very least.

The economics of the local area was based on three major industries: logging, fishing, and tourism. Logging was the local economy's mainstay. At the time of this report, the logging industry was in decline; and the county held the highest unemployment rate in the state at 11.1%. Many of the out of work loggers seemed unwilling to be retrained for new employment. An attitude of "let's wait and see what happens" was very prevalent.

A constant conflict for the previous fifteen years had been the rift between the business community and the environmentalist groups. The community had a small percentage of residents who were very dedicated to the

environmental cause. The area residents had been wrestling with the problem of producing economic development while maintaining the environmental quality which was one of the area,s attractive features.

The community offered much in the way of beautiful scenery and undeveloped forest, beaches, and sand dunes. The draw of the outdoors was tainted only by the rain which could be expected from October through May. Usually the rain was not a downpour but a continuous drizzle throughout the day. Residents had to be willing to brave the rain; otherwise, they would not get out of the house.

This practicum took place in a school district of four thousand students. The district was composed of five elementary schools (grades kindergarten through five), two middle schools (grades six through eight) and one high school (grades nine through twelve).

The district had had difficulty passing the budget for ten years. Funds for the operation of schools had been provided through real estate taxes, taxes on standing timber, and state and federal assistance. Oregon ranked forty-seventh lowest out of the fifty states in providing basic support for schools with just

twenty-nine percent of the total cost funded by the state (Moore, Walker, & Holland, 1982). Both property owners and companies seemed overburdened with this method of school funding. The economic conditions of the area made passing any levy a problem. Most persons agreed that the state's system of funding schools was outdated. Yet the state legislature had been unable to present a plan for change in school funding that was acceptable to a majority of the state's voters.

The existing district tax base was passed in 1950. The cost of education had increased steadily since then while the local economic conditions declined. Each year the district had fallen further behind monetarily and had had to go to the voters for operating funds. It had taken as many as four separate budget elections per year to pass a levy. Public election records indicated that seventy-five percent of all registered voters in the district, on average, either had not voted at all or had voted No in the last twenty special school elections spanning the past five years.

A survey of school district patrons was conducted in the fall of 1987 (Johnson, 1987). Results of the survey showed respondents were most concerned about

school funding, the quality of information from school personnel, the quality of teaching, and the honesty and integrity of school administrators and board members.

Those responding to the district's questionnaire who considered themselves as generally well informed as they would like to be favored a tax base over annual levies by fifty-six per cent to twenty-six percent. Respondents who did not consider themselves satisfactorily informed dropped their tax base support by fourteen percent. This would indicate that a better informed electorate would be more supportive of a realistic tax base for the local schools.

The combination of an ineffective and outdated system of funding schools with last year's teacher strike and the poor economy implied a bleak outlook for the local community. It is against this background that the practicum took place.

## WRITER'S ROLE AND WORK RESPONSIBILITIES

The writer was a speech pathologist working for the Education Service District (E.S.D.). The E.S.D.

a state agency which provided the county's school districts with numerous special services. These services were provided on a cost effective basis for the number of students served. In this manner the E.S.D. was able to assist the county school districts to provide full services to the community at the lowest price possible.

As a speech pathologist, the writer was in daily contact with the students, teachers, principals, and parents of three schools in the local school district. The writer's case load was sixty-three students at the time of the practicum. These students had either articulation, language, voice, or stuttering disorders. An individual education program was designed for each special student. The programs were implemented with the full input and approval of the parents, teachers, and principals concerned with these students.

The writer's responsibilities included testing each student, designing an appropriate individual education program, remediating the problem behavior, consulting with the teachers and other professionals involved with the student, and keeping each principal informed of all that was taking place with each

student. In addition, the coordination of information between the local school district and the E.S.D. was a top priority.

Three elementary schools were directly involved in this practicum. The kindergarten through fifth grade teachers at these schools were invited to participate. Each grammar school had an enrollment of more than four hundred students. As is reflected on the Advisory Committee to the Superintendent (A.C.T.S.)K-5 Survey (Appendix B), the teachers requested more information and training on effective parent conferencing methods.

The writer had worked for fourteen years as a speech pathologist. The past ten years had been spent within the local school district. At the same time, the writer's masters degree was in family counseling and communication techniques. Therefore, much of what is offered in this practicum came from an experiential, as well as from a research, basis. This firm basis has been expanded into the intervention plan which comprises this practicum.

## CHAPTER II

## STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

### Problem Description

The district's elementary school teachers (grade K-5) did not feel competent at planning and implementing a successful parent-teacher conference. In most cases the teachers felt that the college education classes that were required offered no training in the skills necessary to implement an effective parent-teacher conference (Croft,1979). Because of federal legislation, today's parents are even more an integral part of the education of the student. The Buckley Amendment of 1974 and the Public Law 94-142 of 1975 outlined and guaranteed basic parents' rights in relation to the education of their children (Geffer & Perkins, 1987). Being able to plan and to implement an effective parent-teacher conference is a basic requirement for successful teaching.

In today's mobile society teachers may have little opportunity to interact with the parents of the

students except on a limited basis at school open houses, P.T.A. meetings, and conferences (Ellenburg & Lanier, 1984). Since contact is limited, it is necessary for the latter to go well if the parent and teacher are to work together to search for ways to enhance the child's growth and development (Canter, 1984). The teacher must have at hand the skills necessary to join with and actively involve the parent in this process. Education is too much a cooperative venture between parent and teacher to be left to chance.

Much of the problem in parent-teacher conferences derives from the different expectations parents and teachers have for the child. These disparate and often unstated expectations may result in mutual mistrust between parent and teacher (Birnie, 1980). Parents and teachers may not understand what each other is trying to accomplish. It is difficult to exchange useful information about the child in this atmosphere. An unsuccessful conference leaves each party with negative attitudes toward the other and an unwillingness to cooperate (Rabbitt,1978).

Supportive and cooperative parents do exist, and conferences with them are usually successful. However, because society has changed greatly in the last twenty-five years, teachers no longer automatically command respect from many parents and students.

Teacher training institutions have provided little education for prospective teachers in communicating effectively with parents (Barron,1984). Many teachers have unrealistic expectations of themselves, thinking they must be responsible for the students' entire well being from 9:00 A.M. till 3:00 P.M. It is difficult for them to admit that they might need help in dealing with a particular student.

In addition some teachers contribute to the lack of success of parent conferences in several ways. They are unprepared to discuss the student's problems. They may have no documentation of the problem. Because they often lack confidence in their own abilities to deal with difficult parents, teachers put off contacting parents when a problem begins. They choose instead to wait until the difficulty is out of control. The parents then complain, "Why didn't you let me know about this sooner?" (Canter,1984).

The teachers in the local district indicated three main aspects of the problem. These aspects were: (a) lack of teacher training in effective communication techniques, (b) lack of teacher training in conflict resolution, (c) teacher resentment of those parents who intrude on their authority or who question their competence.

## Problem Documentation

The documentation for these problems comes from a school district survey (Appendix A), taken in August, 1988. Fifty-three of ninety-five K-5 teachers responded (Appendix B). They ranked "interpersonal communication and conflict resolution techniques" and "strategies for planning and implementing effective parent conferences" as the top two of sixteen topics of interest to them for in-service.

During fourteen years of teaching experience as a provider of special education services, the writer had the opportunity to participate in many parent-teacher conferences as well as to conduct them. Teachers have been observed to vary greatly in their parent conferencing skills. Much of the variance seemed

related to the teachers' levels of self-confidence and to their expectations in relating with the parents.

Those who expected parent cooperation and were organized, well prepared, and friendly in their presentation of issues usually had successful experiences. On the other hand, those who expected non-cooperation and were not confident that they could handle the conference acted in a manner which fostered antagonism in parents.

Research indicates that there has been a lack of attention paid to assisting teachers to develop their conferencing skills in either pre-service or in-service education (Gress & Carroll, 1985). Until recently few teacher training institutions offered classes or other instruction in dealing with parents. Many teachers would say that the one thing they are least prepared by their training to do is to conduct parent conferences (Rabbitt,1978).

## Analysis of the Causes

The vast changes in American society from small rural communities with extended families to large urban centers with many one-parent families have prompted

corresponding changes in public schools (Pritchard,1977). More centralized population has resulted in more centralized schools. This shift has made personal daily contact between parents and teachers a rare occurrence.

Parents and teachers frequently come from diverse backgrounds. Non-supportive parents who are busy with their own work and family duties question the teachers' capabilities. Some may even be outwardly antagonistic and hostile.

In addition many teachers feel that they are responsible for their students' entire well being. The expectation is that they think they should be able to handle whatever occurs in their classrooms (Manning, 1985). Therefore, they may be reluctant to ask parents for help or may approach them in a beaten manner.

Because parents and teachers come from varied backgrounds and have differing relationships with the child/student, they often have different expectations for the same child. One or the other may have an unrealistic picture of what the child is able to achieve. If the teacher attempts to help the parent assess his or her child's potential realistically, the

parent may accuse the teacher of being insensitive and uninformed. If the parent tries to change the teacher's perception of the child, the teacher may react similarly (Heinrich, 1985).

## Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

In the literature there is a consensus that effective communication skills are the essential elements that determine the success or failure of the parent-teacher conference (Canady & Seyfarth, 1979). Unless the teacher is able to join with the parents, the latter will not feel that their position is heard and given consideration. Without the teacher's use of basic joining skills, the conference will not move in the direction of parent-teacher cooperation to meet the needs of the student.

In relation to parent-teacher conferences, Bernard Cleveland (1987) stated:

> Parent-teacher conferences can be a delight or a horrendous experience depending upon the reason for the conference, the human relation skills the teacher possesses, and the attitudes of the parent(s). Building rapport through pacing and

> leading should be a goal for every teacher. Using change states techniques may be very helpful in altering parental moods. (p. 218)

These thoughts point out clearly how important training in and knowledge of effective communication techniques are for teachers who want to implement effective conferences with parents.

Lois B. Hart (1976) conducted a study of parents and teachers to determine what information they feel is most important to share at conferences. The implication of the Hart study was that parents and teachers differ in the importance they attach to various types of information. Parents who rank academic progress highest are likely to be disappointed if the teacher spends much time discussing the student's social adjustment.

Parents should be able to ask for and receive the information that they want about their children. Teachers need to be sensitive to the parents' priorities while conveying information about the student. Techniques for doing this are discussed in Chapter IV.

The aspects of learning covered in the search of the literature were: a) communication skills, b) the collaborative consultation model, c) characteristics of adult learning, and d) conflict resolution techniques. Each area will be covered in some detail.

Communication skills to stress within the parent-teacher conference are: a) joining, the knowledge and skill of matching posture and voice tone of the listener while pacing the tempo of one's movements and speech to that of the parent and slowly changing, matching and leading so that the parent will follow the teacher toward the outcome to be achieved (Bandler,1985) and b) use of paraphrasing, summarizing, clarifying, reflecting, and asking open-ended questions all of which assist to keep the relationship open between the parent and the teacher (Tannen, 1986).

The collaborative consultant model emphasizes that, to be effective, the teacher must view the parent-teacher relationship as one that is collaborative. Both parents and teachers are partners, each with important input concerning the child. The teacher moves away from the role of expert toward mutual respect where both parent and teacher can work

together towards a common goal (Idol, Paolucci-Whitcomb, & Nevin,1986).

One important area which has been overlooked in dealing with parents is the nature of adult learning. It seems that teachers have a great deal of training in understanding children's learning styles and stages of development. Yet, within the parent-teacher conference, a relationship is established with another adult. Therefore, it is helpful for teachers to know the various stages of adult development and the priorities which motivate adults at each stage. With such information teachers can be more effective at joining with and motivating parents of their students (Krupp,1987).

The last area covered in the literature search was that of conflict resolution. It is important for the teacher to feel comfortable when faced with disagreement from a parent. It is unrealistic to expect to be agreed with at all times. Therefore, the teacher would be wise to learn not to take parental statements personally, to state what he or she is willing to do without giving in, and to work toward a

solution with which all parties can feel comfortable (Fisher & Ury, 1983).

If teachers master the preceding skills and are prepared to use them, they enhance greatly the chances of conducting a successful parent conference. A successful conference is one in which the parents leave with a positive attitude toward the school and staff and with a willingness to work cooperatively with them. Another characteristic of a successful conference is that the parent and teacher leave trusting each other and having a better understanding of what each is trying to accomplish for the child/student (Canady & Seyfarth,1979).

# CHAPTER III

# ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

## Statement of General Goals

The first general goal of this practicum was to train kindergarten through fifth grade teachers in effective communication skills, conflict resolution, and stages of adult development. The communication skills presented from Neuro-Linguistic Programming were leading, matching, pacing, and joining (Cleveland, 1987). Other communication skills which were emphasized were paraphrasing, summarizing, clarifying, and asking open-ended questions. Roadblocks to communication which should be avoided were also presented (Robinson & Brosh,1980).

The conflict resolution skills which were covered included: a) separating people from the problem; b) focusing on interests, not on positions; c) inventing options for mutual gain; and d) insisting, if possible, on using objective criteria (Fisher & Ury, 1981). By taking these steps, teachers can feel competent even

with an unreasonable parent.

The characteristics of adult learning that were discussed were that adults: a) have an established learning style, b) have a need to socialize, c) enjoy being in control of the situation, d) have educational goals, e) want to please others, f) need recognition, g) need relevancy, h) are cautious, and i) have definite physical needs (Krupp, 1987). By knowing these characteristics, teachers can better understand parents' priorities and motivate them more effectively toward considering change.

The second general goal was to assist kindergarten through fifth grade teachers to effectively plan for and implement quality parent-teacher conferences. This included deciding which subjects to discuss, gathering data to back up these viewpoints, focusing on some positive qualities of the student, and considering some possible solutions to any problems.

Behavioral Expectations and Measurement of Objectives

First, each teacher would list seven of eight stages of adult learning. This listing could be presented to the writer either orally or in writing.

Second, each teacher would use the "Conference Day Preparation" forms for teacher and for parent as a basis for planning each conference. These forms would serve as a guide for the teacher to follow during the parent conference while being observed by the writer (Appendices C and D). The forms would be turned into the writer upon completion of the conferences.

Third, each teacher would demonstrate understanding of the eight roadblocks to communication by listing an example of at least seven of the eight roadblocks (Appendix E). Some of these roadblocks which tend to stop conversation are ordering, threatening, preaching, advising, criticizing, shaming, psychoanalyzing, and instructing. Communication is enhanced if these conversational detours are avoided (Robinson & Brosh, 1980).

Fourth, during the observations the teachers would implement at least three of the communication techniques presented in the training. Some of these techniques are pacing, matching, summarizing, clarifying, and joining.

Each participating teacher would be observed during three parent-teacher conference role playing

scenarios. The teacher would demonstrate a variety of appropriate techniques for dealing with difficult people. One or more of the types of difficult people (Staller, Bulldozer, Complainer, Sniper, Sherman Tank and Exploder) would be included in the role playing scenarios.

In addition, each participant in the training would role play situations which require conflict resolution techniques. In two of three scenarios, the teacher would use the skills taught to resolve a conflict. Use of these skills in real life would enable the teacher to implement calmly a proven strategy for coming to mutual agreement in every sort of conflict.

After each scenario, an evaluation of the teacher's strengths and weaknesses would be made. The writer would share ideas and encouragement with each learner. At this point each participant would be asked to evaluate his or her own performance orally and would be allowed time to ask questions of the writer.

Following the completion of the training and role playing experiences, the teachers would conduct at least two actual conferences with parents of their

students. During these conferences, the writer would observe to determine which of the previously learned skills the teachers were using.

## Plans for Analyzing Results

Pre and post self-rating questionnaires were administered to the teachers participating in the training (Appendix G). These questionnaires dealt with the teachers' perceptions of personal competency in conducting effective parent conferences. Questions about each subject area of the training were included.

The rating system used on the questionnaires was based on numbers one through seven. A response of one indicated total disagreement with the statement, and a response of seven indicated total agreement with the statement. These questionnaires were used to assess any changes in the teachers' perceptions of their abilities to plan and conduct effective parent-teacher conferences. In addition, the questionnaires were used to identify any changes in the teachers' perceptions of improvement in their knowledge and skills.

Data was collected during the writer's observations of teachers during role playing scenarios and actual parent conferences (Appendix H). This data was analyzed to show the relationship between the teachers' self-perceptions of improvement and the writer's discernment of their conferencing skills based on observational data. This analysis helped to determine the overall effectiveness of the training.

# CHAPTER IV

# SOLUTION STRATEGY

## Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

Some authors suggested solutions which used a training group or relied upon the reading of training materials (Gazda, Asbury, Balzer, Childers, & Walters, 1977). Training groups are useful only if there is an easily accessible group available to the teacher. Without a group in process, there is little chance that the teacher will go to the effort of initiating a new group (Miller & Sabatino, 1978). For this reason it is necessary to offer the training in the school setting rather than via a do-it-yourself-method.

In addition reading a book seldom assists a person to achieve mastery of a program. Intellectual knowledge rarely becomes a skill without specific practice. Training in the form of low stress role-playing and in observed parent-teacher conferences would be preferable.

The results of previous teacher conferencing programs received a poor rating by this writer. After participating in many parent-teacher conferences over the past fourteen years, this writer would rate only ten per cent of the teachers as demonstrating effective parent conferencing skills. The writer would agree with Canter (1984) that this is a sad commentary on the level of teacher training.

The study of past solutions resulted in the grouping of suggestions which focused on one or more of the seven components already identified. None of the offered solutions included all of these components. This has resulted in fragmented, partial approaches to the whole problem of parent-teacher conferencing.

Some authors focused on a group of "cookbook" solutions to various conferencing problems (Croft, 1979). While this approach is useful, it leaves the teacher without the skills necessary to handle unique problems when they arise.

In addition, the literature regarding parent-teacher conferences offered many suggestions for improvement. These suggestions seemed to focus on communication skills and on techniques for maintaining

control of the meeting. The end result has been that there are many "How to" books and pamphlets on the market; yet, few of these deal with the problem as a whole. All the skills and techniques are useful but only when used as a total approach by a trained professional. Training of teachers to use a total approach to parent conferencing, or the lack thereof, is the key issue.

To secure the skills and confidence necessary for the teacher's successful implementation of parent-teacher conferences, it is vital to train teachers to understand and use all of the eight components of an effective conference. These important components of parent-teacher conferences help to build a true partnership between teacher and parent. A teacher must have each component in his or her repertoire of skills in order to achieve a positive outcome for all concerned.

The eight skills necessary for conducting an effective parent conference are: a) knowledge of the topics of importance to parents, b) preconference planning skills, c) effective communication skills, d) understanding of and ability to implement the

collaborative consultative model, e) roadblocks to communication, f) understanding of the characteristics of adult learning, g) ability to use conflict resolution techniques, and h) coping with difficult people. If a teacher possesses all of these skills, she or he can creatively plan and implement an effective parent-teacher conference.

Teachers also gain in self-confidence and self-esteem as they manage effective conferences without the need to feel totally responsible for the outcome of the conference. The emphasis of the teacher is on a partnership with the parent. In order for a partnership to work well, both partners must be willing to cooperate and to share skills and ideas.

## Description of the Selected Solution

The solution which was implemented was based on the needs of teachers within the school district. The needs identified by the teachers and administrators were in the areas of parent conferencing, communication skills, and conflict resolution. All three of these areas were addressed in the final solution.

Training was offered to the kindergarten-fifth grade teachers in the areas of the characteristics of the adult learner, pre-conference planning skills (Appendices C and D), roadblocks to communication (Appendix E), effective communication techniques (Appendix F), techniques to cope with difficult people, and conflict resolution techniques. All of these components comprise the whole of effective parent conferencing. If any of these parts is omitted, the holistic approach to parent-teacher conferences is incomplete.

The writer was prepared to implement three one-half day teacher training workshops. These workshops were approved by the school district's administration and were designed to cover the components previously listed. Experiential training for the teachers was offered through demonstration, role playing, and management of actual parent-teacher conferences.

Regular feedback, encouragement, and evaluation were provided to the participating teachers. The teachers were asked to evaluate their own performances. In this way each participant compared his or her individual perceptions with those of the writer.

In order to assure cooperation of the teachers, Continuing Education credit was arranged for those attending. These credit hours were applicable toward satisfying the requirements for renewal of the state's teacher certification.

The workshops presented covered the following information, with each part of the workshop being discussed in order and in full detail. First, preconference planning skills were presented. The process of effectively planning for a parent-teacher conference began with knowing the parents' names. This may seem like a trivial point; however, the writer has been amazed how many times teachers holding a conference have to start searching through their notes in order to remember the parents' names. With the number of divorces and remarriages in today's society, it is common for children's last names to differ from their parents'. Lack of this information can start the conference off on the wrong note.

To assist the teacher in the planning process, the Conference Day Preparation Form (Appendix C) was followed. The conference objectives were the next vital piece of information upon which the teacher

needed to decide. If the teacher does not make a firm decision upon the objectives, the conference can become an experience of confused wandering for the teacher and parent alike. However, the use of the preconferencing format can eliminate this potential problem. If the teachers follow the checklist of the form, they will gather all the necessary information including the student's file, samples of work, class procedures, positive statement, plan of action, and the behavior contract form. This method of preparation enhances the potential for a positive outcome to the parent-teacher conference.

To gain experience the teachers were asked to decide upon the conference objectives and to fill out all other pertinent information using a hypothetical student and folder. This training assisted the teachers to become competent at transferring important information from the student's file to the Conference Day Preparation Form. This form became the map for the parent-teacher conference.

Second, the roadblocks to communication were presented (Appendix E). These roadblocks stop communication between any two parties. Teachers must

be well prepared to identify, avoid, and, if necessary, reframe these roadblocks to communication.

There are eight roadblocks to communication. Use of any one or combination of these roadblocks is enough to stifle communication. The eight roadblocks are: 1) ordering, directing, commanding; 2) warning and threatening; 3) preaching or moralizing; 4) advising; 5) judging, criticizing, blaming; 6) name calling, ridiculing, or shaming; 7) interpreting or psychoanalyzing; 8) teaching and instructing.

Effective communication is essential from the beginning of the parent-teacher relationship for the individuals to release feelings and, understand the problem before they can begin making decisions and taking action. The parent-teacher relationship is different from that in a social conversation and requires more than just giving advice. An effective parent-teacher relationship is dependent upon the skills of the teachers to understand the feelings and message of the parents whom they are helping. The teacher helps the parent explore problem situations and investigate possible solutions. It is not effective to tell the other person what to do. The teacher must use

a variety of communication skills, verbal and nonverbal, to maintain a non-judgmental, supportive relationship. The parent must be made an equal partner in the problem solving process. This is why it is so important for the teacher to avoid any of the roadblocks to communication.

In order to facilitate their full understanding of the roadblocks, various teachers were asked to role play them in front of the workshop participants. Some examples of roadblocks are: 1) ordering, directing--"You should.." or "I don't want you to feel that way. Just do what you're asked."; 2) warning, threatening--"If you don't help, you'll regret it," or "You had better stop talking like that."; 3) preaching, moralizing--"You're older. Good girls do things willingly without complaining."; 4) advising--"If I were you, I'd talk to your son."; 5) judging, criticizing, blaming--"That isn't true, and you know it," or "It's all your fault."; 6) interpreting, psychoanalyzing--"You feel that way because you're insecure," or "Your problems must have started in early childhood."; 7) namecalling, ridiculing, shaming--"It's stupid to act that way," or "You should feel

ashamed of yourself. You're acting like a kid.";
8) teaching, instructing--"Here, I'll show you how to do it," or "Do it my way and you'll get better results."

The teacher can enhance the conference by avoiding these roadblocks and remembering that the parent is a partner in the process, not an adversary. The focus is one of mutual respect and cooperation.

The third skill necessary is the understanding of and the ability to implement the collaborative-consultative model within the parent-teacher conference setting. In order for a consultative relationship to be established the teacher must acknowledge that it is based upon collaboration. This means that mutual consent on the part of the adults is involved. Setting the stage for this step to be taken is the teacher's responsibility.

A mutual commitment by both parents and teacher to the objectives of the conference and to the means of resolving an agreed upon, identified problem is the base upon which the consultative relationship is built. Without a commitment by each side, this process will never begin. The joint development of an intervention

plan builds the trust level of the parents. For once they are being asked for input and suggestions.

Both teacher and parent(s) must arrive at an understanding of mutual responsibility for the implementation and evaluation of the intervention plan. This understanding is the corner-stone of the consultative process. Instead of the teacher assuming the role of an expert, the emphasis is one of collaboration between persons who have their own area of expertise.

The question that is usually asked at this time is, " Why should teachers consult with parents?". The answer is very simple: "Because it works!". Students benefit academically, mentally, and emotionally when their parents share ideas, assist in one another's growth, and cooperate in activities.

Also parents need help. Over fifty percent of the parents feel unsuccessful and unsupported. Forty-five percent report no contact with other adults during a typical day. With statistics like these parents do need to be empowered to believe in their own worth as adults. Through this process the student is also helped as the parents' self esteem returns.

Many teachers wonder, "What shall I consult about?". The parents need help with understanding how a student learns. Misunderstandings occur when the parents are still of the belief that if the child isn't understanding the material, it means that she or he isn't trying and needs to do more of the same. This is not necessarily true, and the teacher provides an extra set of eyes and shared insight which the parents may use for further evaluation of the problem.

Another area for consultation is that of assisting the parents to find more creative methods of dealing with their child's behavior problems. If there is a behavior problem at school, it is usually reflected at home. The parents will appreciate suggestions if their help on other problems has been previously solicited and if the teacher has de-emphasized his own contribution to the process.

The keys to effective consulting are: a) The teacher must share the responsibility for problem solving; b) The teacher must see the parent as an expert; c) The teacher needs to de-emphasize his/her contribution; d) The teacher must communicate the freedom to accept or reject any suggestion or solution;

e) The intervention plan must be individualized to meet the needs of the parent(s); f) A "minimum rate" expected must be agreed upon by the teacher and parent; g) Documentation must be kept of the efforts of the teacher, student, and parent; h) The teacher must support the parents through the recognition of success.

The teachers were educated in the collaborative-consultative process at the three workshops. During role play situations, they were evaluated on their effective use of the consultative model. This experiential part of the training was necessary for the teacher to truly own the use of the collaborative-consultative model.

The fourth skill was that the teacher demonstrate knowledge of the topics of importance to the parents. A teacher must be able to determine what information the parents need to hear, as well as provide the information in which the parents are most interested. A great amount of skill is needed by the teacher to effectively weave both the needed information and the wanted information in such a way that both parties leave the conference feeling satisfied. Lois B. Hart (1976) conducted a study of parents and elementary

school teachers in Syracuse, New York, to find out what information teachers feel is most important to report to parents and what information the parents want to hear from the teachers.

Parents were most interested in learning about their child's academic progress, how children learn, and ways of helping their children do better in school. During the course of the conference, the teacher needs to provide this information.

Teachers felt that parents need to know about how their children learn and about their children's academic progress. Yet, they ranked the importance of academic progress lower than information about the child's social adjustment. Parents attached less importance to information regarding social adjustment than any item other than school goals and organization. Parents ranked information about the child's conforming to school standards fourth; yet, teachers ranked it sixth.

Teachers and parents obviously value different types of information. Parents who value academic progress above any other information will feel

disappointed when the teacher stresses social adjustment and ignores academics.

Parents should be able to ask for and to receive the information they want about their child's performance in school. The teacher should be able to report a wide variety of observations affecting the child's total development as a human being. Both parties can be satisfied if the conference agenda is made explicit. This process can be developed before or at the conference. Preplanning the agenda is helpful through the use of letters, forms, or telephone calls.

The fifth skill to be learned by the teachers was effective communication. Communication is one characteristic that makes us human. A person is communicating something whenever he is in the presence of another person. The question is whether the communication is effective. To have effective communication, one must establish rapport, or join, with another person. Such rapport building is essential to the success of a parent-teacher conference.

Rapport can be defined as a state in which a person is most responsive to another. Rapport building

can be, and most often is, unconscious. However, it can be established via conscious, scientific methods which, with practice, can become unconscious aspects of the teacher's behavioral repertoire.

A first step in establishing rapport is to use pacing which allows the teacher to make contact with the parent's model of the world (Cleveland, 1987). Pacing includes matching the language of the parents by using similar predicates. Individuals have referent (input) systems of choice - auditory, visual, or kinesthetic - through which they learn most about the world. The action words they use indicate which referent system they are using. For example, "I hear what you're saying," "That sounds like...," or "That rings a bell," would represent the auditory input system.

The visual referent system would be indicated by expressions such as "I can't see how to do it," or "It doesn't look right,". "It doesn't feel right," or "I can't get a handle on it," would refer to the kinesthetic referent system.

Another aspect of pacing is the matching of voice tone, volume, and tempo of speech. A person may also

mirror the other's posture, gestures, eye movements, facial expressions, or breathing patterns. Such strategies help the parent feel understood. With practice a skilled person can establish rapport in anywhere from thirty seconds to five minutes.

To determine if rapport has been established, the teacher can use a leading technique. The teacher makes a subtle change in his or her behavior (altering either posture, voice tone, tempo, predicates, etc.). If the parent duplicates that alteration, then rapport has been established.

Most of the techniques described to join with a person are essentially nonverbal. However, much of our communication is verbal in nature, especially in a conference setting. Therefore, teachers must be skilled verbal communicators. In addition to eliminating verbal roadblocks to communication, they must learn to employ facilitative listening skills (Tannen,1986).

In the workshops six facilitative listening skills (Appendix F) were presented to and practiced by the teachers. The first is asking open, rather than closed, questions. An open question is one that

requires more than a one-word response. It encourages the talker to continue and to feel understood. Some examples are "Tell me more about that," or "How are you feeling about that?". Closed questions may be answered "yes" or "no" or may put the talker on the defensive. Questions beginning with "why" are particularly to be avoided.

The second facilitative technique is clarifying. This skill is used to attempt to understand something which is not completely clear to the listener. For example, "Are you saying...?" or "Let's see if I understand."

Reflecting is the third skill. It lets the talker know that his/her feelings and content are being heard. A person might say, "You seem really happy/ upset/ worried because...."

The fourth skill which was presented is understanding. This provides empathy, not sympathy, for the speaker. Some examples are, "It must be hard to make the decision," or "That can be really uncomfortable."

A fifth skill for practice is summarizing. An attempt is made to highlight the main ideas and/or

feelings of the speaker. The listener might say, "It seems as if you have mixed feelings about this situation. You want your child to receive help, but you don't want him to feel singled out."

The sixth and last facilitative listening skill is very important. Teachers must learn to send I-messages rather than you-messages. This involves taking responsibility for one's own thoughts and feelings. The teacher states, "I feel frustrated/happy/ angry, etc. when ...." The teacher avoids saying, "You make me angry/frustrated/ happy."

The sixth general topic to be presented was "Coping with Difficult People" (Bramson, 1981). A teacher can expect at least ten per cent of the parents to be uncooperative and unreachable. It is helpful to break down the difficult people into personality types. Those that would present the most challenge to a teacher are the Exploder, the Sniper, the Sherman Tank, the Staller, the Complainer, and the Bulldozer.

By learning to identify the common patterns, common needs and common products of these types, the teacher would be prepared to encounter them in a conference. The training could also give the teachers

specific techniques for dealing with each type of difficult person.

The training covered each type of difficult person individually. The first to be presented was the Exploder. The common patterns of behavior which the Exploder demonstrates are tantrums, rage, fearsome attacks, "super touchy", and irritation. These behaviors are easily identifiable by the teacher.

The common product of such behavior in the teacher is a feeling of bewilderment or surprise. Teachers may feel horrified when they meet their first Exploder but later may have a reaction of anger and resistance. These latter feelings are commonly experienced by many who have had an encounter with an Exploder.

Teachers can help themselves deal with Exploders by understanding their common needs. The Exploder feels threatened and thwarted. This pervasive feeling allows the Exploders to approach life with distrust and suspicion. This approach itself creates the expectation that their wants will be threatened and blocked by others. The final step in this vicious circle is that the Exploder moves through interactions with anger, blame, and defensive tactics.

Some techniques for dealing with an Exploder are: a) Give them time to run down by using repetition of the person's name, or stand up and sit down two or three times in a row; b) Show your serious intentions by saying, " Stop! This is an extremely important issue to you. We must discuss it but not in this way." Then take out note paper, and begin writing; c) Interrupt the interaction by taking a break or stating, "I want to hear everything that you have to say. Let's step into the ____. That way we won't be disturbed or disturb others."

The second type of difficult person to deal with is the Sniper. This individual uses a method of innuendo, subtle but not too subtle, to attack. Often non-playful teasing or non-verbal signals are combined in this assault.

The results produced in a teacher by a Sniper's attack are feelings of being pinned down, struck by a verbal missile, dumbfounded, paralysed, or having a sense of inner resentment. If teachers will pay attention to their feeling states, they can more effectively identify the type of difficult person in a conference.

The common needs of the Sniper are: a) a strong sense of how others should think and act; b) the expectation that the principal will make change even when the principal has no say; c) a strong motivation to get their own way which leads to more frequent and harsher attacks on the person, not the problem; d) the need to feel in control. The belief of the Sniper is that if I undercut you and you look ridiculous, I reaffirm my own rightness without the danger of being overwhelmed.

Some techniques for coping with a Sniper are: a) Surface the attack; b) Provide the Sniper an alternative, "That's an interesting comment; do you have another suggestion?"; c) Seek group confirmation or denial of the Sniper's statement. If others agree, then problem solve. If the group disagrees, then ask the Sniper to be more specific; d) Deal with problems rather than avoiding them. Use probes in this process and be careful; e) Prevent sniping during regular meetings and be sure to hold regular meetings; f) Stay out of third party sniping because the game is "let's you and them fight". When these techniques are implemented, the Sniper is brought into the open and

his game exposed. "It's like spitting in the child's soup; he can still eat it, but it doesn't taste as good," (R.Dreikurs, 1959).

The third type of difficult person is the Sherman Tank. The common needs of this type of personality are to prove they are right at all costs. They feel a need to shape the world as it ought to be. A win by wounding is preferred.

The Sherman Tank holds the perception that all tasks are clear, concrete, straight forward, and simple. The route they take starts with resistance, moves to impatience, then slides through irritation to righteous indignation which leads to the final goal of outright anger. This approach costs dearly in friendship, relationships, honest disagreement, and feedback.

The common values of the Sherman Tank are short term solutions, aggressiveness, and confidence. All of these result in distancing, if not outright alienating, other people.

The techniques for coping with the Sherman Tank are: a) avoid responding with fear or rage, b) avoid a head-on fight, c) stand up for yourself, d) give the

person time to run down, e) get in without worrying about being polite, f) carefully get the other's attention, g) get the person to sit down, h) speak from your own point of view (I-messages), and i) be ready to be friendly. Any of these strategies will help sidetrack the Sherman Tank.

The fourth type of difficult person is the Staller. The common pattern for the Staller is an inability to make a decision. The teacher who needs a decision to be made quickly about the placement of a child is in a difficult position.

Ironically, this behavior comes from people who genuinely want to please and to be helpful to others. The desire to be helpful to others presents them with a great problem. The problem is how to make a decision that will please everyone. They feel that they cannot knowingly reject or hurt anyone.

Stallers are known for their high standards. These same standards are the culprits that make quick decisions so hard. They use these standards as the rational for making no decision at all.

The common product the teacher feels in coping with a Staller is growing frustration as decisions are

not made. This is followed by a sense of betrayal by both parties. The Stallers feel betrayed by the teachers who are irritated with them. The teachers feel betrayed by someone they thought was on their side and understood the problem.

Some techniques for coping with Stallers are: a) Make it easy for Stallers to tell you about conflicts or reservations that prevent making a decision; b) Listen for indirect words or clues that provide clues to problem areas; c) When the issues surface, help the Staller problem solve and reach a decision; d) If the Staller's reservation is about the teacher, acknowledge any past problem; and either propose a plan or ask for help; e) Help the Staller prioritize the problem in order to decide whom to turn down; f) Give support after the decision has been made; and if possible keep the action steps in hand; g) Watch the parent for signs of sudden anger or withdrawal. If these occur, remove the parent from the decision process and go back to identifying the aspects of the problem. Remember that Stallers hint and beat around the bush, not to frustrate the teacher, but as a compromise between being honest and hurting anyone.

The fifth type of difficult person is the Complainer. This type has a whining, almost singsong, quality that self-righteously blames and accuses others. Such persons manage to complain about everything. The message is that someone should do something about this problem. That someone is usually the teacher.

Complainers do point out real problems but in a manner that elicits defensive or placating responses from others. This type of problem-solving approach is ineffective because it leads to more complaining.

The common needs of the Complainers are a feeling of powerlessness to determine their own fate and a strong sense of how others should behave. Also complaining is self-validating; because the harder they try, the less change they get. This, in turn, fulfills the prophesy of powerlessness.

The common product that a teacher feels around a Complainer is a "wish to escape". The teachers may find themselves thinking, "For God's sake, stop whining." The teacher feels generally uneasy.

Some techniques for dealing with the Complainer are: a) Listen attentively to the complaints even if

you feel impatient; b) Check your perception and paraphrase to be sure they are understood; c) Don't agree with or apologize even if the allegations seem true; d) Avoid the accusation, defense, reaccusation pattern; e) Try to move to problem solving by asking specific informal questions, assign fact finding tasks, or ask for complaints to be in writing; f) If everything fails, ask the complainer how he wants the discussion to end. Remember to be patient because the Complainers expect to prove themselves powerless through the teacher's behavior.

The sixth type of difficult person is the Bulldozer. These types act like know-it-alls. They convey a belief that they are definitely superior. Know-it-alls come in two different variations, Bulldozers and Balloons. Both communicate as if they know all there is to know. The difference is that Bulldozers do know a great deal while Balloons don't.

Bulldozers' common needs are to order facts and knowledge to provide stability in their world. These difficult people can't stand uncertainty and strive even harder to impose their order on everything. Many Bulldozers are very productive people. However, people

that have to work with them feel that they are playing the child end of the parent-child relationship. From early childhood these persons learned that they always received exactly what they deserved. They feel that results depend only on their own efforts. This results in the Bulldozer spurning others' ideas or conclusions. Each time the Bulldozers methodically push to an objective, they are reinforced by the security that comes from being self-directing and unmindful of others.

The common products of the actions of a Bulldozer are: a) Others feel humiliated, immobilized, and hopelessly angry; and b) because they usually are right, they leave others feeling inept and stupid; they leave no room for anyone else's judgement. One of the best statements the writer has heard about Bulldozers is that it's awfully hard being around someone who thinks they are always right and usually is!

Coping with Bulldozers requires these techniques: a) Be fully prepared; b) Listen carefully and paraphrase the main points of the Bulldozer's proposal; c) Avoid blanket statements; d) Raise problems in a questioning form and disagree tentatively but don't

equivocate; e) Watch out for their know-it-all behavior; f) Convey appreciation of the Bulldozer's knowledge; g) Propose delaying action to review the other's proposal; h) If necessary, take the "one down" position to avoid a fight and to try to build a relationship of equality in the future.

Balloons range in scope from inept braggarts to pompous tyrants, and finally to articulate and skillful "experts" that spread confusion wherever they go. They are not simply liars and con-artists because they believe they know what they are talking about.

The basic need of the Balloon types is that they have an overwhelming desire to be admired and respected by others. This gets them into a bind when they pass on bits and pieces of information as if these were absolute fact.

Techniques for coping with a Balloon are: a) State correct facts or opinions as descriptively as possible and as your own perception of reality, b) Provide a means for the Balloon to save face, c) Cope with a Balloon when alone, if possible. When the teachers focus on their own perception of reality, the situation becomes one of "win-win".

In order to totally prepare the teachers to cope with difficult people, a method of establishing a coping plan was part of the training. The coping plan consists of these steps: a) Describe in detail the behavior of the person you find difficult; b) Write down your understanding of that behavior; c) Describe your past behavior with this person. In what situations did the interactions seem better or worse?; d) What coping behaviors are likely to work. What past behavior has and hasn't worked?; e) Review part c and identify what personal behavior(s) need attention in order to effectively carry out the best coping behavior; f) What coping behaviors need practice?; g) Take action -- what and when will the plan be implemented?. This procedure can establish the confidence to cope with the difficult persons in teacher's life.

The seventh topic which was presented was adult learning characteristics. These learning characteristics are: a) Adults have an established learning style toward which the teachers need to adapt their input; b) Adults have a need to socialize; therefore, the teacher needs to take an adequate amount

of time getting acquainted, relating on a personal level, doing active listening, and sharing experiences; c) Parents enjoy being in control of the situation; so the teacher needs to provide an opportunity for the parent to be involved, to plan cooperatively, and to accept new ideas; d) Most parents have educational goals for themselves, and the teacher can provide some resources or accentuate opportunities for growth; e) Adults want to please others and a statement of appreciation from either the teacher or the principal can enhance the positive involvement of a parent; f) Parents have definite physical needs so the teacher needs to keep the meetings short, provide goodies, be considerate when setting dates and times, and provide for their space needs; g) Parents have a need for relevancy. Therefore, the teacher needs to be specific, not theoretical, and to make practical suggestions for the parents concerned; h) Adults are cautious when sharing their family life. The teacher can respect this need by providing privacy, obtaining parents' permission to share their child's success, and giving them time to think. As the teacher learns to attend to the adult learning characteristics, the

chances of implementing an effective parent conference are doubled.

The eighth topic presented in the training was Conflict Resolution (Fisher & Ury, 1981). Many teachers have a habit of misperceiving that they are in charge of a parent-teacher conference. Whether we like it or not, adults routinely engage in positional bargaining. Parents often have their own point of view which does not coincide with that of the teacher. In many parent-teacher conferences, each side takes a position, argues for it and makes concessions to reach a compromise.

When people find themselves in a conflict, they usually react in one of two ways: with soft or hard responses. The person who wants to avoid conflict will make concessions to maintain peace. The resolution arrived at leaves the person feeling used and bitter. This person is a soft responder.

The hard responder sees any interaction as a contest of wills and holds out longer to achieve an extreme position. The hard responder often generates a similar response from the other person; this results in

an exhaustion of resources by both sides and in the relationship being harmed.

The third way of handling conflict is neither hard nor soft but a unique combination of each. It is the method of Principled Resolution. This method decides issues in conflict by focusing on their merits rather than on what each side says it will or won't do.

Principled Resolution focuses on mutual gains whenever possible. This process is based upon mutual respect among parties (Dreikurs, 1971). This method provides a win-win situation for both sides. It enables the teachers to be fair while protecting them against those who would take advantage of their fairness.

Principled Resolution of conflict can be used in many different situations and on many different issues; it is an all purpose strategy. When combined with Adlerian principles of conflict resolution (Dreikurs, 1971), it enables the teacher to handle difficult conferences with honest respect for the parents while maintaining personal dignity. Both parties to the conflict resolution process are assisted through the use of this method.

Mutual respect given to and expected from the parent is a vital component of Principled Resolution. This means that an individual honors the other as a fellow human being. Although they may disagree, each expects the other to offer the courtesy of respect. Each has a right to have and to express his or her opinion in a nonthreatening way.

If teachers come from a position of mutual respect, they don't fight with a parent; yet, they don't give in either. During this part of the process the teachers must commit themselves to listening. Active listening conveys respect for the parent.

The next step in the resolution process is that of pinpointing the problem. What specifically does each side want? While the issue is pinpointed, each person must be allowed to get some of their feelings out. Care must be taken at this time not to let the emotions interfere with pinpointing the problem. It just makes matters worse to take positions with which our egos become identified.

In order to work efficiently on the substantive problem, people need to be disentangled from the problem. Separate the people from the problem. The

members of the conference need to arrive at the point of seeing themselves as working side by side, and attacking the problem, not each other.

An effective resolution is one that meets the interests of each side as much as possible, fairly resolves troublesome interests, withstands the tests of time, and accounts for the interests of the community. The three criteria for judging any resolution are: a) It should create a wise resolution; b) It should be efficient; c) It should improve or, at least, not damage the relationship between the parties (R.Fisher & M.Ury, 1981).

The position that parents or teachers take within a conference often obscures what they really want. A compromise between positions is not likely to create an agreement that will satisfy the human needs that led the people to adopt those positions. Therefore, it is vital that the focus of the participants of the conference be on interests, not positions.

Before people attempt to reach an agreement, it is necessary to invent options for the mutual gain of both parties. The amount at stake varies inversely with the amount of creativity displayed by each person. These

restrictions can be loosed by setting up a designated time within which to create a variety of solutions that advance shared interests and reconcile differences.

Insist on using objective criteria to achieve a fair standard upon which to base agreement. This method avoids the pitfall of rewarding the stubborn person on either side. By discussing this criteria, rather than what each side is willing to do, neither side needs to give in to the other; yet, both parties can defer to a fair solution.

The final step for resolving conflict is to make a short term agreement. Too often people in conflict reach an agreement and leave the meeting as if the plan is written in stone. They act as if no changes in the agreement will ever be necessary. This position is foolish. All agreements need modification at some time. A change in the economy, geographics, or the daily schedule can affect an agreement. No matter how well intentioned the parties are, a short term agreement with another meeting time set to discuss the results of the agreement is required. This meeting allows for both sides to affect any needed changes in the resolution agreement. The meeting enhances the

chances of a long lasting, effective solution to the conflict.

The teachers' ability to orchestrate these eight components of the parent-teacher conference will become fine tuned with practice. They will feel ill at ease during their first few tries. Given time, encouragement, and the courage to be imperfect, the teachers will become skillful practitioners of the art of effective parent-teacher conferencing. This art is necessary for the creation of the accepting environment required to establish an equal, workable parent-teacher relationship.

## CALENDAR PLAN

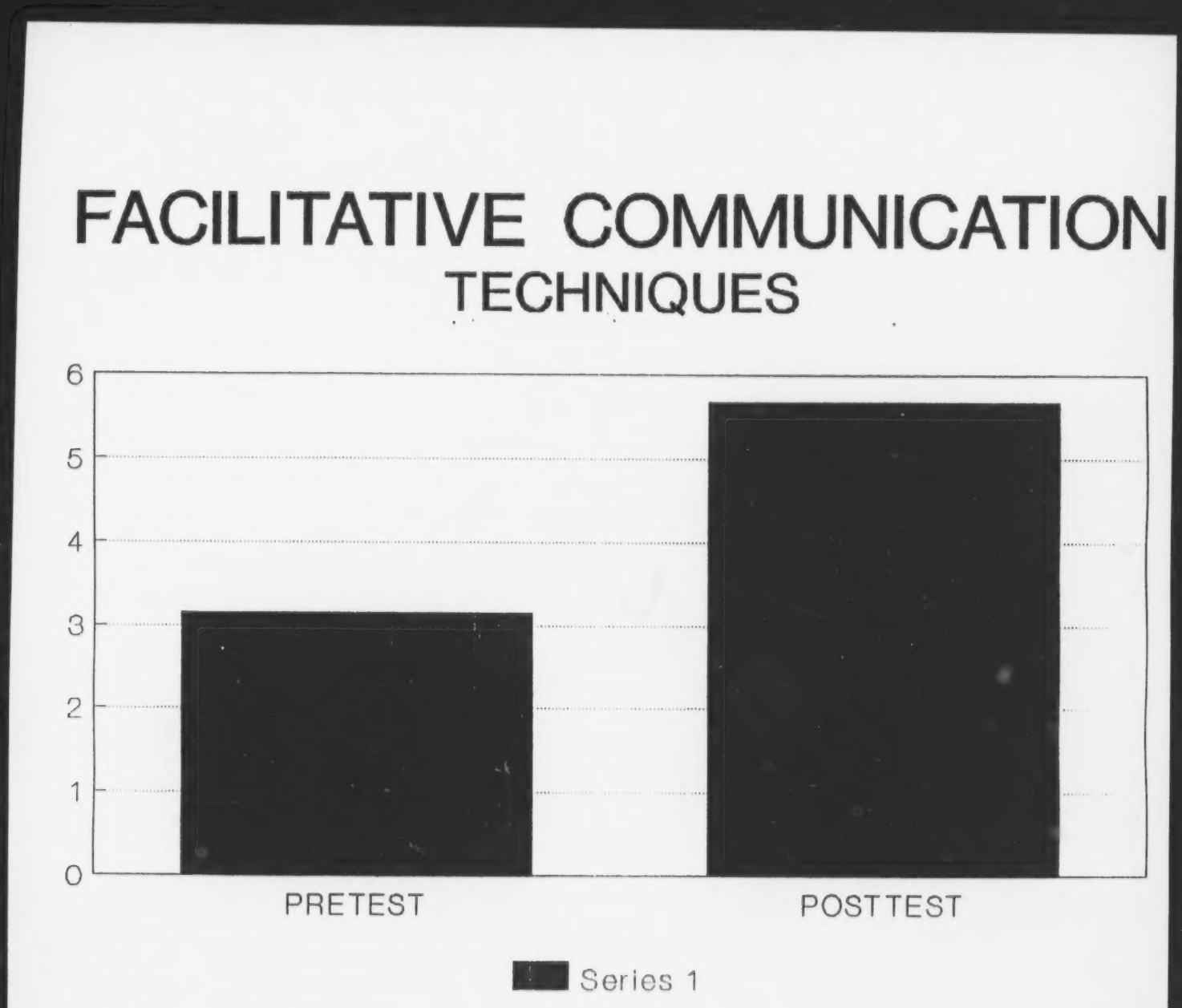
The plan was to present three half-day teacher training workshops with scheduled follow-up observations. These workshops were approved by the school district's administration. Also approval for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) credit was arranged for the participants.

The steps which were taken were:

1. Project initiation (April 3, 1989).
2. Gain approval from the district administration to hold three four-hour workshops for interested elementary teachers (April 10, 1989).
3. Gain approval for CPD credit from the district administration (April 10, 1989).
4. Gain approval for the use of the large meeting room at the Education Service District building (April 14, 1989).
5. Send out sign up sheets for the workshop sequence to each elementary school in the district (April 14, 1989).

6. Contact prospective participants regarding time, place, CPD credit and follow-up observations (April 28, 1989).
7. Conduct the series of three workshops (May 26, July 19, and August 30, 1989).
8. At final workshop establish schedule for follow-up observations of actual parent-teacher conferences (August 30, 1989).
9. Carry out observations and provide written and verbal feedback to and from teachers (September 10, 1989 through February 9, 1990).
10. Finalize data and write Practicum II Report (March 14, 1990).





CALENDAR PLAN

| 1989 APRIL | 1989 MAY | 1989 JUNE | 1989 JULY | 1989 AUGUST |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| initiate Project 4/3/89 | wksp. 5/26/89 | | wksp. 7/19/89 | wksp. 8/30/89 |
| approve wksps. 4/10/89 | | | | sched. observations 8/30/89 |
| approve CPD credit 4/10/89 | | | | |
| mail wksp. signup 4/14/89 | | | | |
| reserve conf. rm. 4/14/89 | | | | |
| contact particip. 4/28/89 | | | | |

| 1989 SEPTEMBER | 1990 FEBRUARY | 1990 MARCH |
|---|---|---|
| observe & give feedback 9/10/89---------- | observe & give feedback 2/9/90 | write turn in rept. 3/14/90 |

CHAPTER V

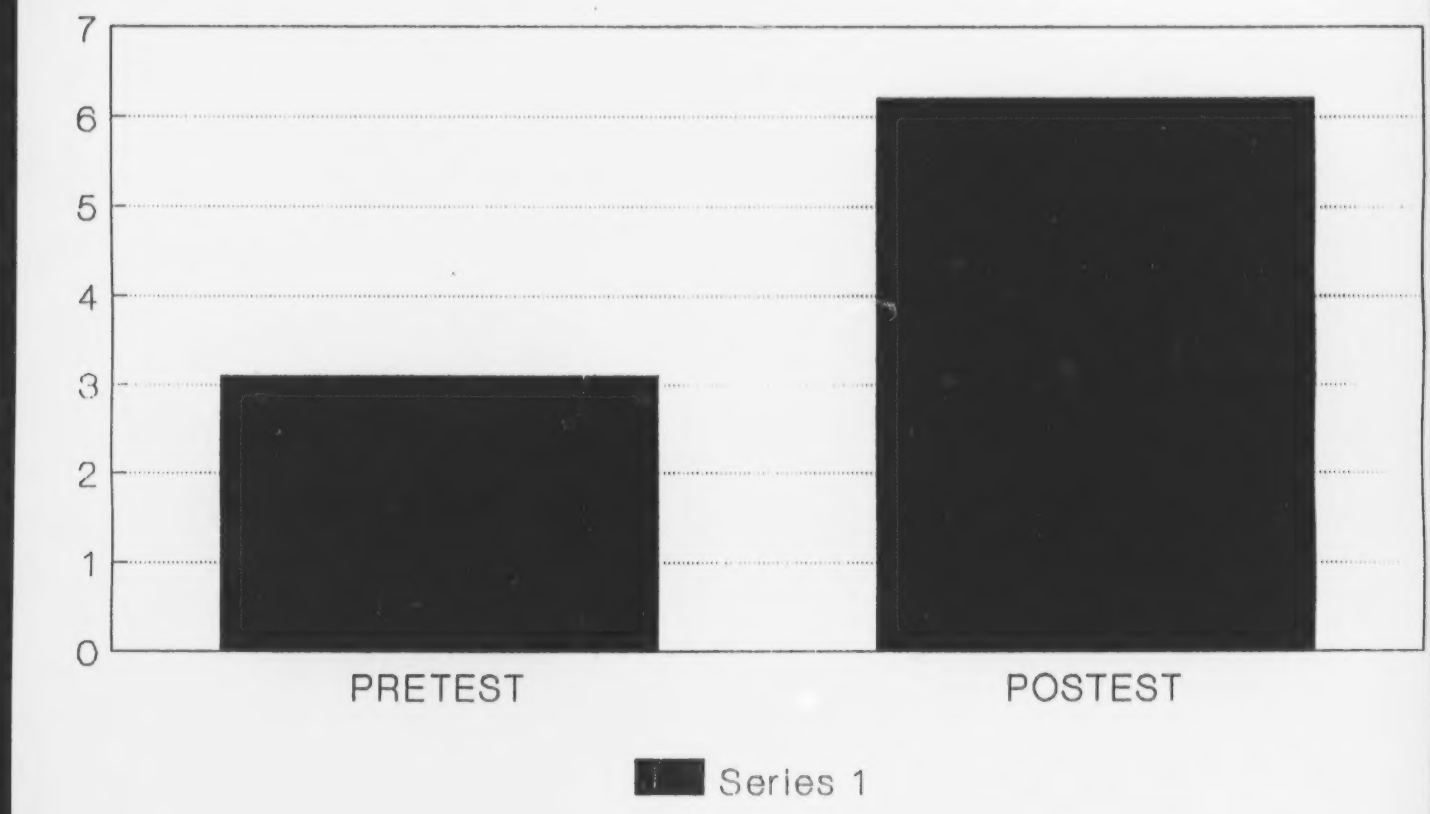
RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

## SUMMARY

The workshops for and observations of the teachers assisted the teachers to hold effective parent-teacher conferences. The desired outcome was to achieve an atmosphere of mutual respect in which both the parent and the teacher could assist the student.

The joining strategies of Neuro-linguistic Programming and methods for coping with difficult people were not mastered by most of the teachers. Those who did master these techniques had previous experience with them from other trainings. Still, the teachers as a whole achieved the goal of creating an atmosphere in which both parent and teacher collaborated to achieve a workable outcome for the student.






AVERAGE TEST SCORES

## RESULTS

Twenty-four teachers from three elementary schools originally participated in the training. Nineteen of the teachers completed the program. Five dropped out because of work overload, family emergencies, or staff relocation.

The results of the teachers' pre- and post-self-rating questionnaires were analyzed. In addition, the writer's observations of the teachers' performance during role play situations and actual parent-teacher conferences were compared and contrasted to the results of the teachers' self-rating questionnaires.

For a clear and concise presentation of the results the writer will analyze each question from the teachers' self-rating questionnaire individually. This method of presentation will allow the reader to comprehend the writer's conclusions and to more easily form his/her opinions about the results presented.

There were seven statements that made up the teacher self-rating questionnaire. Each statement with its results is discussed individually. A rating system

of numbers 1 through 7 was used. Number one represented complete disagreement, while number seven represented total agreement, with the statement.

All seven areas were covered during a series of three workshops which were presented for the participating teachers. The teachers' responses to the statements on their self-rating questionnaire reflected their learning from these workshops. In addition, the writer's observations were used to verify or negate some of the teachers' self perceptions.

The writer analyzed the results of the teachers' survey using a simplified method. This method entailed the addition of the teachers' self- rating score for each statement and dividing this by the number of teachers (19). The answer is the average teacher response for each statement on the pre- and post-test.

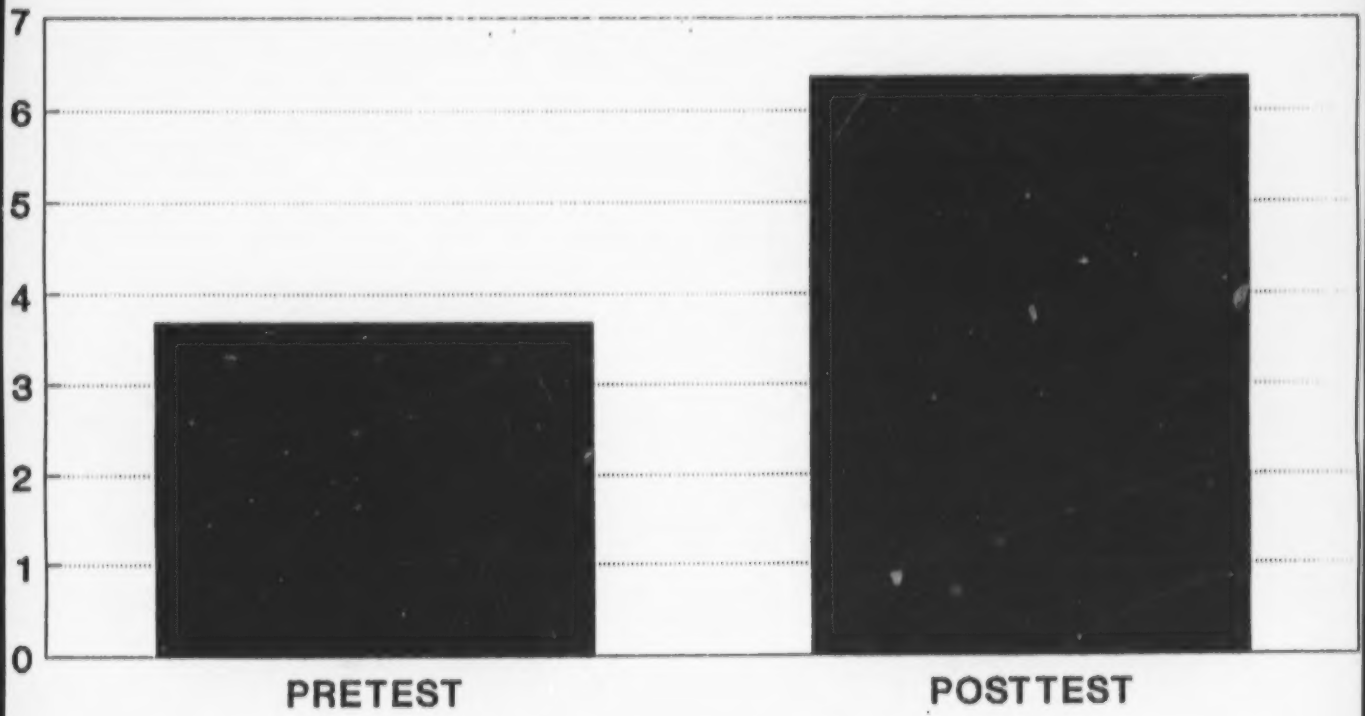
This statistical method kept the level of simplicity high for this practicum. After comparing the teachers' pre- and post-test scores, the writer contrasted these scores against the observational results. A score of six or above, by the teachers, was being used to signify the mastery level.

The first area analyzed was that of preconference planning skills. As part of the workshop training, the Conference Day Preparation Forms were used. The teacher's form (Appendix C) and the parent input form (Appendix D) were distributed to the teachers and discussed. The nineteen teachers who completed the training had an average pre-test score of 3.684. The teachers' post-test score average for area one was 6.368. These scores show a significant increase toward the mastery of preconference planning skills as perceived by the teachers (see chart, page 68). The writer's observations verified the teachers' scores.

Many of the participating teachers stated their appreciation of the inclusion of this area in the conference training. The teachers felt that no strategy for planning conferences had been included in their preservice training. Also preconference input from parents had not been considered.

The second area analyzed was that of adequate training for conducting effective parent conferences. The majority of the teachers felt that adequate preservice training was lacking in this area. This was reflected in the pre-test average score of 2.842. The

# Preconference Planning Skills




Average Test Scores

teachers stated that they felt that this area was almost completely overlooked by their teacher training institutions.

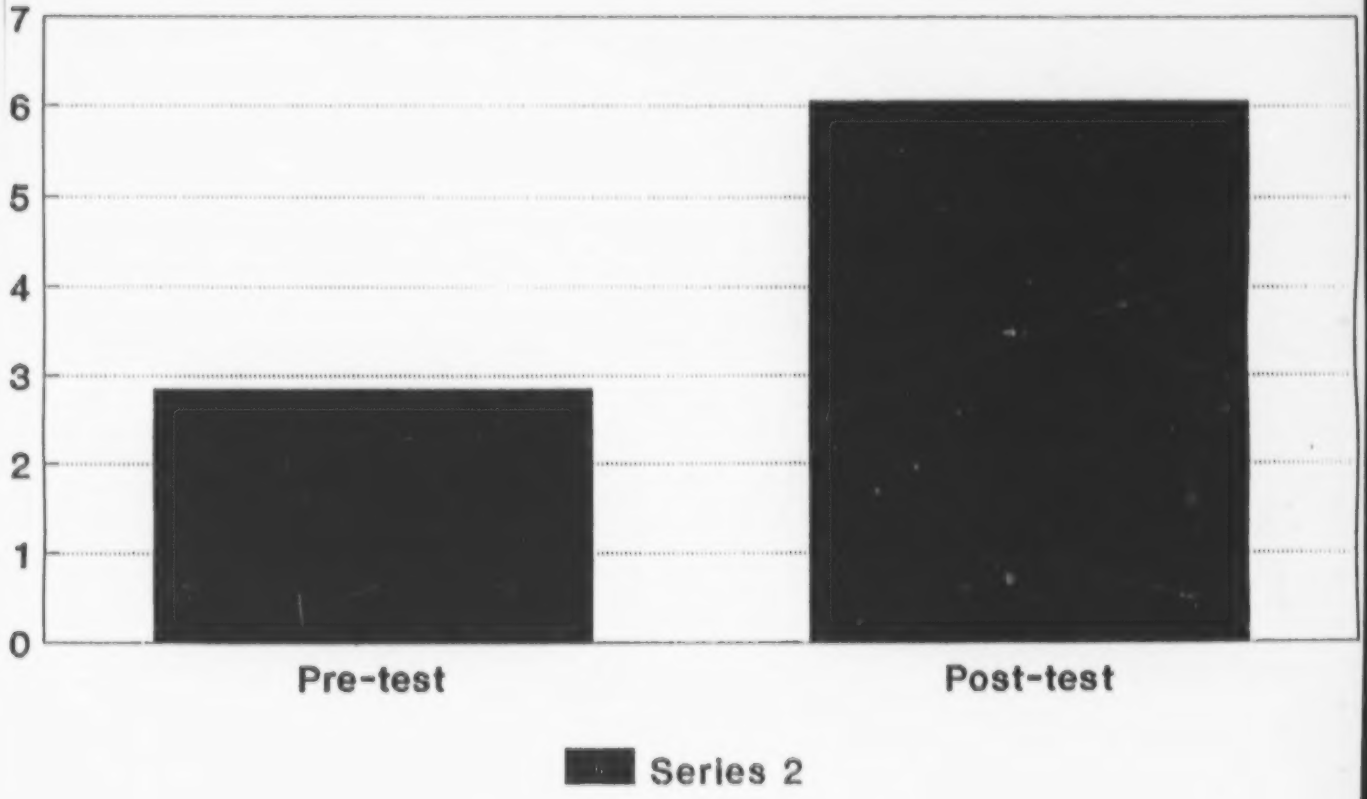
The post-test average score in this area of 6.052 clearly reveals a difference in feelings of competence by the teachers (see chart, p. 70). The writer's observations again verified these results. The teachers' comments to the presenter also reflected this significant change.

The teachers as a whole accepted the training as a very positive experience. Statements were made to the effect that for the first time these teachers were looking forward to the parent conference as a positive problem solving meeting rather than as a time for the teacher to protect him/herself from the criticism of the parents.

The third area of analysis concerns the teachers' ability to avoid the roadblocks to communication (Appendix E). The teachers' pre-test results averaged out to 3.263. This score reflects a near mid-range feeling of competency. The writer's initial observation of the group reflected a lower rating than that which the teachers gave themselves. Perhaps the

# Effective Parent Conferences

## Conducting



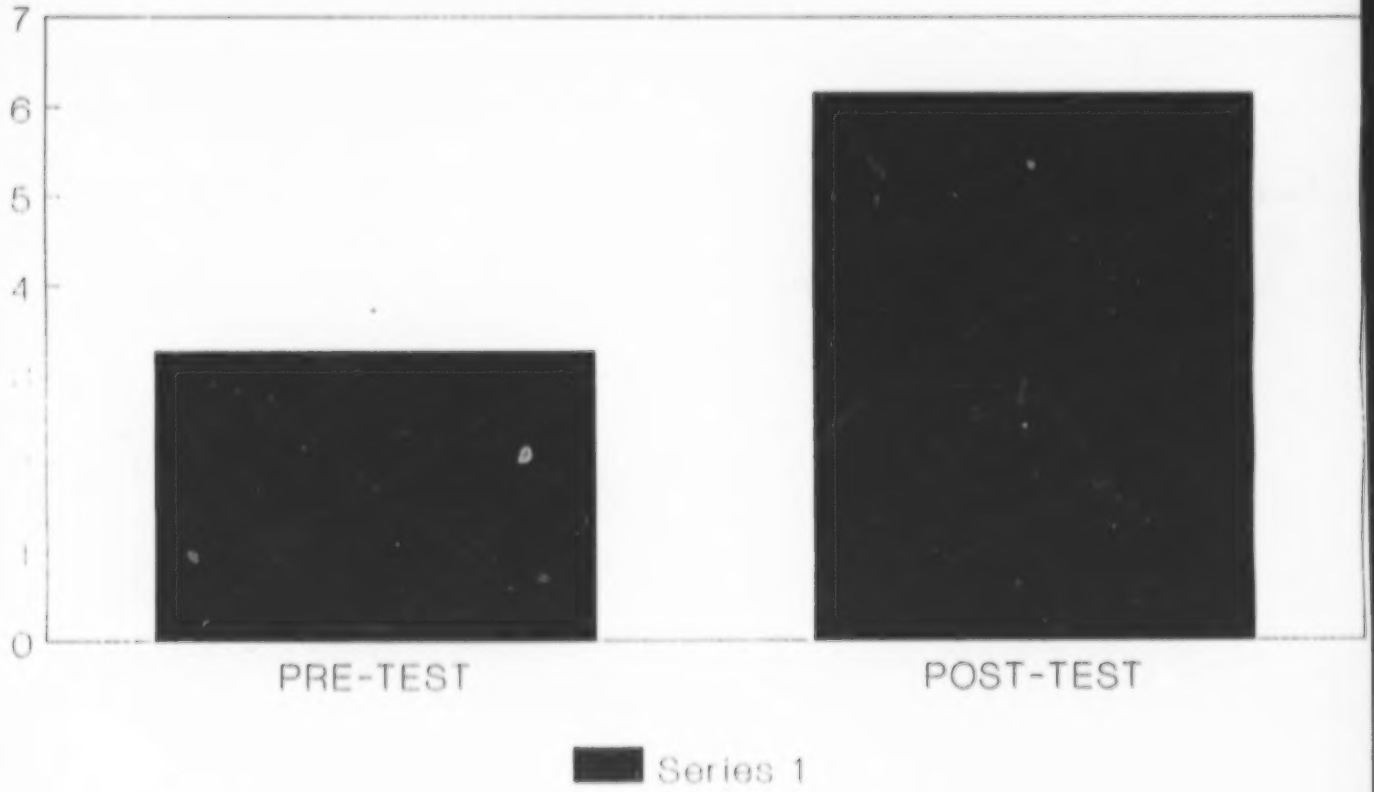

AVERAGE TEST SCORES

writer had judged the teachers' performances more critically because of his fifteen years of professional experience in the communication field. This may account for the discrepancy between teachers' and writer's perceptions.

After the training, role playing, and observations, the teachers scored their competency at avoiding these roadblocks with an average score of 6.157 out of a possible seven. The writer's observations confirmed this increase in communication ability. The teachers were definitely more concerned with the parents' needs and feelings while feeling more comfortable in their own ability to handle the conference situation. This is the third area in which definite improvement by the teachers was reflected (see chart, p. 72).

The fourth area analyzed was that of coping with difficult people. This was one of the more difficult skills for the teachers to master for many reasons. The lack of time for teachers to practice with different types of difficult people seemed to be the main obstacle to the lack of mastery of the subject matter.

# AVOIDING ROADBLOCKS
## COMMUNICATION



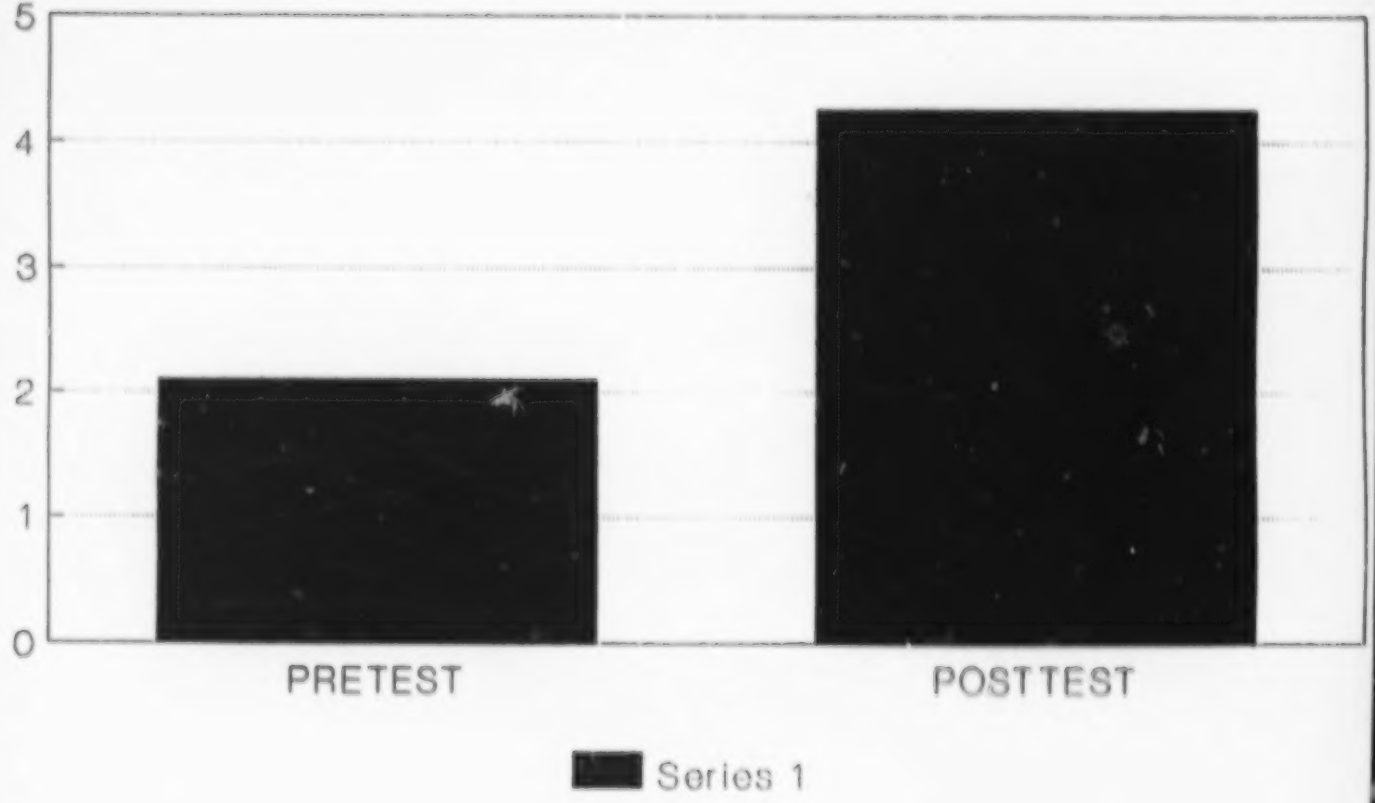

AVERAGE TEST SCORES

The pre-test average score by the teachers for dealing with difficult people was 2.105. This score alone reflects that the teachers felt intimidated by difficult parents. The teachers expected to have conflict and perceived a need to protect themselves.

The post-test score of 4.263 reflected some growth toward mastery by the teachers but still indicated that the teachers had some moderate level of discomfort about dealing with difficult people (see chart, p.74). Again, the writer's observations confirmed the teachers' self scoring. The writer felt that more training time should have been devoted to this area so that the participants could have adjusted the techniques to fit their own personalities. This extra practice time might have allowed each teacher to feel as comfortable as possible while the personal growth necessary for dealing with difficult people took place. A person must have a sense of self-esteem to handle difficult people in stride.

The fifth area of analysis was the knowledge and use of the facilitative communication techniques. Effective use of these techniques approaches an art form to be learned through constant practice and

# DIFFICULT PEOPLE
## COPING




AVERAGE TEST SCORES

experience. The basic techniques can be easily learned, but developing them into skills with which the user is comfortable does not come so easily.

The average pre-test score was 3.157. This score reflected the teachers' discomfort with the techniques of joining, reflecting, summarizing, and I-messages. Although some of these skills were known to the teachers, this was on more of an unconscious than a conscious level.

The post-test score average of 5.684 indicated a definite increase in knowledge and ability (see chart, p. 76). A level of mastery was still not attained.

Within the scope and time of this practicum, the writer observed that a large learning step had been taken by the teachers. Only effort and experience will produce full mastery of these techniques. Therefore, within the limitations of this practicum, the writer acknowledges that appropriate learning had taken place.

The sixth area of analysis was familiarity with and the ability to accommodate the characteristics of the adult learner. This area seemed to be one of those most overlooked by the teachers.

Knowing that the parent has specific issues of importance to him/herself and has needs which include being part of the decision making process gives the teacher a firm foundation on which to build each parent conference. Too often the teacher will focus on the social skills and behavior of the student rather than covering the student's grades which are usually of prime importance to the parents. A masterful teacher will cover all these areas of concern with the parent while showing how each area contributes to the total individual. In this way the parents' cooperation can be fully reinforced.

The average pre-test score for this area was 3.105. Many of the teachers stated to the writer that the concept of adult learning characteristics was new to them. The teachers' previous training had focused on treating the parent courteously while informing them of the teachers' agendas.

The post-test score average was 6.210. This learning jump was verified by the writer's own observations (see chart, p.78). It was pleasing to see the priority status that the parent's agenda was given by the teachers. The teachers were still able to cover

the priorities they had established while meeting the needs and enlisting the help of the parents concerned.

The seventh area analyzed was the teachers' knowledge and use of conflict resolution. The teachers' pre-test average score was 2.578. This low initial score reflected the teachers' lack of training in this critical area. Most of the teachers encountered the Principled Resolution method as a totally new approach.

The teachers had already learned the concept of mutual respect. The next step of pinpointing the problem was the hardest step for the teachers to learn. Looking at a problem from both sides of the issue requires discipline and self-esteem.

Making a short term contract on whatever had been decided so that necessary changes could be made was another part of conflict resolution that teachers did not like. They felt that they didn't have the time to reconnect or to follow-up with the parents. A solution that could be "written in stone" would have been preferred.

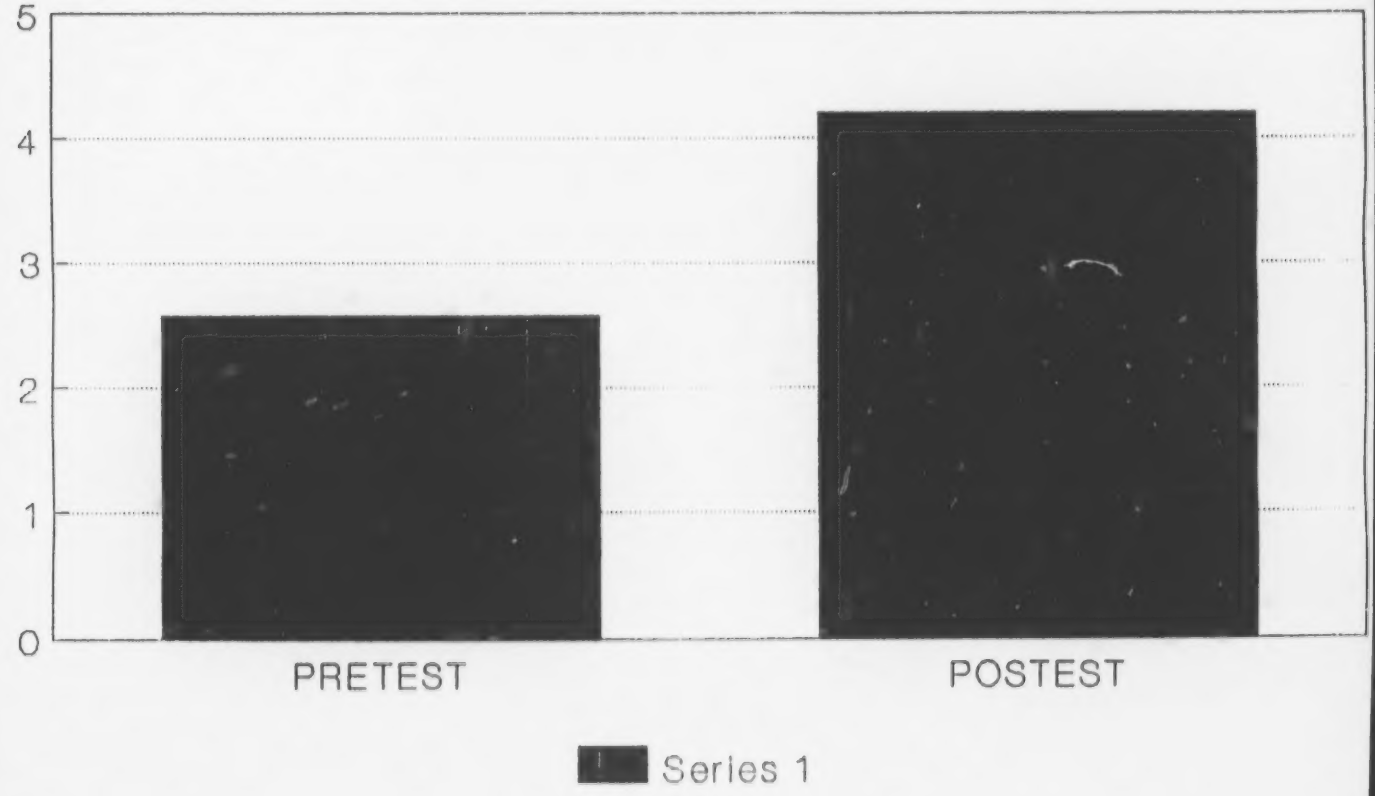
As a result the post-test score average was 4.210. The writer surmised that this skill takes time and maturity for its effective use to be developed. The fact that there was some positive movement reflected in the scores was encouraging to the writer (see chart, p.81).

## ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

The writer decided that the use of the number six or better on a scale of one to seven would signify mastery. Although this was an arbitrary choice, a score of six on a seven point scale would indicate an eighty-five percent or better achievement level. If the teachers were able to perform at this level of expertise, the writer would consider them to be at the mastery level. A comparison of the pre- and post-test scores is made on the summary graph, page 83.

As a group the nineteen teachers rated themselves average of six or better in four of the seven areas. These areas were: a) understanding preconference planning skills, b) conducting effective parent conferences, c) avoiding the roadblocks to communication, and d) accommodating the adult learner's

# CONFLICT RESOLUTION
## KNOWLEDGE AND USE



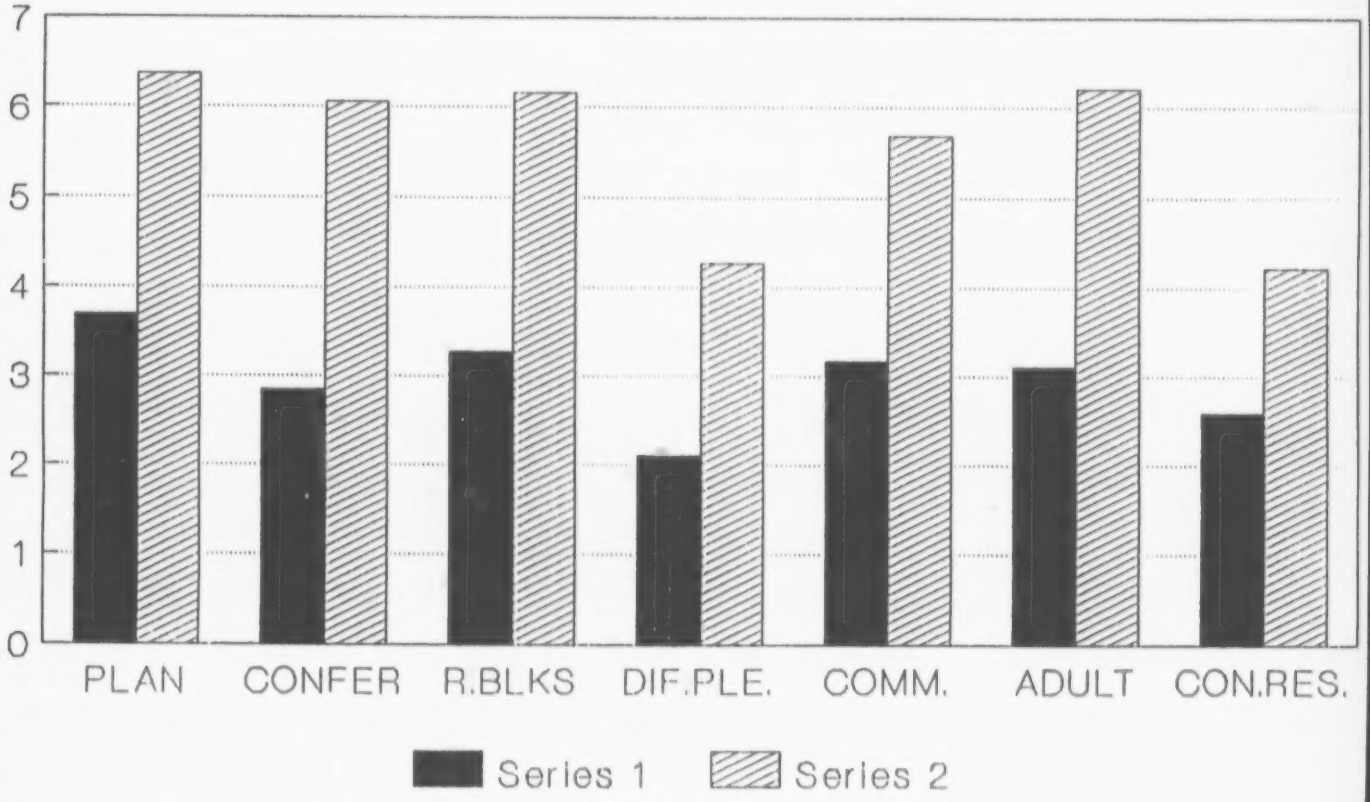

AVERAGE TEST SCORES

characteristics. The writer's observations correlated well with the teachers' conclusions. Therefore, the writer concluded that mastery had been achieved in these areas.

The three areas in which mastery was not achieved were: a) coping with difficult people, b) using facilitative communication techniques and c) using conflict resolution strategies. Post-test scores for these areas varied from a low of 4.210 to a high of 5.684. Definite improvement from pre-test to post-test scores were easily identified, yet a mastery level of six or better was not achieved.

A primary reason for lack of mastery in these three critical areas was the teachers' limited opportunity to practice with a variety of persons to achieve the skill and comfort levels necessary for mastery. Since the teachers have been operating in a system in which parents have such critical input on issues of funding and curriculum, they have been short changed by the teacher training institutions by lack of training in these areas. The training institutions must be made aware of this deficiency in their training programs.

# SUMMARY GRAPH
## TEACHER RESPONSES




AVERAGE TEST SCORES

Also sufficient time for consulting with parents has not seemed to be a priority in the local district in which this practicum took place. Two conference days, for a total of sixteen hours, are planned each year with 15-20 minutes allotted per conference. Such limited time makes successful conferences difficult if any areas of concern must be shared and any problem solving must take place.

A neighboring district has one in-service day per term so that the teachers can prepare grade reports and plan/hold conferences. This district also has twenty-four hours of conference time per school year set aside for conferences at the elementary level.

In order to cope with limited conference preparation time, teachers in this practicum were encouraged to target for conferences two or three students/parents who would benefit most from in- depth planning. They were asked to schedule these parents for forty minute sessions so that rapport could be established and time would be available to address parent concerns/needs and to problem-solve, if necessary.

In order for the teacher training institutions to better prepare teachers for effective parent conferencing, a plan must be presented which will cost them little in time or money to implement. The writer has already discussed such a plan with the Assistant Superintendent of the local district. Plans are already in action to request the University of Oregon to oversee a pilot project focusing on further training within the district to focus on the three areas not mastered by staff in this practicum. This plan will cost neither the university nor the district any monies. The Education Service District will supply the trainer and materials at no cost. Training will occur after teaching hours, and the E.S.D. will be in charge of keeping the data. The final results would be presented to the University along with suggestions as to what university staff could do to assist in pretraining teachers in this area.

Overall the writer concluded that the practicum was a success. The total scores for all seven areas changed from a pre-test average of 2.962 to a total post-test average of 5.563. These scores indicate an average increase in teacher learning of 2.601 on a

seven point scale for all seven learning areas. The teachers definitely improved their ability to preplan and to hold effective parent conferences. Improvement was noted in all areas including those which require time, effort, and growth in self esteem.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The first recommendation is that all teachers receive inservice training in all seven areas of effective parent-teacher conferencing.

The second recommendation is that the teacher training institutions be made aware of the critical need for competency in planning and holding effective parent conferences before teachers gain certification.

## DISSEMINATION

The practicum and its results will be presented to the administrators of the local district and the E.S.D. Following this presentation, plans are in process for a

presentation to be made to the University of Oregon's department of teacher education.

The writer has been asked to speak with the local chapter of the Association for the Education of Young Children. Results from the practicum will be shared with this group. It is possible that the writer may then be asked to speak at the state meeting of the A.E.Y.C.

References

Bandler, R. (1985). Using your brain--for a change. Mohab, Utah: Real People Press.

Barron, B. & Colvin, J. (1984). Teacher-talk to parents. Education, 105, (1), 76-78.

Birnie, B. (1980). Working with parents. Instructor, 89, 52-58.

Bramson, R. (1981). Coping with difficult people. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press.

Canady, R. & Seyfarth, J. (1979). How parent-teacher conferences build partnerships. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappan Educational Foundation.

Canter, L. (1984). Parent conference book. Santa Monica, CA: Canter & Associates, Inc.

Cleveland, B. (1987). Master teaching techniques. Stone Mountain, GA: The Connecting Link Press.

Croft, D. (1979). Parents and teachers: a resource book for home, school, and community relations. Belmont,CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co.

Dreikurs, R. (1971). Social equality: The challenge of today. Chicago, IL: Contemporary Books, Inc.

Ellenburg, F. & Lanier, N. (1984). Interacting effectively with parents. Childhood Education, 60 315-318.

Erikson, E. (1976). Reflections on the life cycle of Dr. Borg. Dadaelus, 105 , 1-27.

Fisher, R. & Ury, W. (1981). Getting to yes. New York: Penguin Books.

Gazda, G., Asbury, F., Balzer, F., Childers, W. & Walters, R. (1977). Human relations development: A manual for educators. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Geffer, J. & Perkins, P. (1987). Effective communication with parents: A process for parent/teacher conferences. Childhood Education, 64, (1), 19-22.

Gress, J. & Carroll, M. (1985). Parent-professional partnerships - and the IEP. Academic Therapy, 20, 443-449.

Hart, L. (1976). Dear parents: What you want to know isn't necessarily what we want to tell you. In S.B. Simon & J. A. Bellanca (Eds.), Degrading the grading myths: A primer of alternatives to grades and marks (pp. 210-216). Washington, D.C.:

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Heinrich, L. (1985). Parent/teacher conferences: Include the student, please. Learning, 14, 86-87.

Hudson, S. (1985). Policy considerations: An integral component of state funding formulas. Unpublished manuscript, University of Illinois. (Advisor: Robert Henderson).

Idol, L., Paolucci-Whitcomb, P. & Nevin, A. (1986). Collaborative consultation. Rockville, MD: Aspen Systems Corp.

Johnson, C. (1987). Survey of community attitudes concerning Coos Bay Public Schools. Hadlock, WA: C. Montgomery Johnson Associates.

Krupp, J. (1987). Understanding and motivating personnel in the second half of life. Journal of Education, 169, (1), 20-46.

Manning, B. (1985). Conducting a worthwhile parent-teacher conference. Education, 105, 342-343.

McSweeney, J. (1983). Five guidelines for parent-teacher conferences. Clearing House, 56, 319-320.

Miller, T.L., & Sabatino, D.A. (1978). An evaluation of the teacher consultation model as an approach to

mainstreaming. Exceptional Children, 45, (2), 86-91.

Moore, M.T., Walker, L.J., & Holland, R.P. (1982) Fine tuning special education finance: A guide for state policymakers. Education Policy Research Institute of the Educational Testing Service, National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Education.

Pritchard, K. (1977). Effective parent-teacher conferences in urban schools (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 152942).

Rabbitt, J. (1978). The parent-teacher conference: Trauma or teamwork? Phi Delta Kappan, 59, (7), 471-472.

Robinson, E. & Brosh, M. (1980). Communication skills training for resource room teachers. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 13, 162-165.

Tannen, D. (1986). That's not what I meant. New York: Ballentine Books.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE SUPERINTENDENT

Appendix A



A. C. T. S. K-5 Survey

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The ACTS Committee has been formed for the purpose of identifying areas of focus for Coos Bay school programs during the 1988-89 school year. We are asking for your cooperation and assistance in helping with this identification process which will provide an opportunity for your input on staff and program developement/improvement.

Please circle the appropriate response:

1. Position: K-5 Teacher K-5 Administrator
2. Grade Level Working With: _____
3. How many inservice opportunities did you have in the last year?

   1-3: 4-6: several:
4. Given a choice of times, the most productive time schedule for future inservice activities would be:

   a. evening b. weekend workshops c. series of after school meetings d. week-long summer session e. basic summer session
5. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) credit should be offered for time spent in inservice activities to those who desire it whenever

possible:

YES NO UNDECIDED

6. Inservice workshops should be aimed at developing the teacher's role as a professional: i.e., coping with stress, time management, interpersonal communications, etc.

YES NO UNDECIDED

7. Inservice workshops should be aimed primarily at developing teacher skills as they directly apply to classroom/school activities/communication with parents.

YES NO UNDECIDED

8. I definitely would be interested in a workshop concerning the State's newly developed Essential Learning Skills concepts and ways to implement them effectively in the classroom.

YES NO UNDECIDED

9. I definitely would be interested in a workshop concerning more effective parent-teacher conferences/communication skills/conflict resolution.

YES NO UNDECIDED

10. Please rate your interest in inservice activities on the following topics:

a. not at all b. not very interested c. some interest d. interested e. very interested

____ Behavior Management for Students

____ How to interpret Diagnostic Testing and Student File information

____ Legislative Issues and Legal Aspects of Education

____ Curriculum Ideas for Talented and Gifted Students

____ Brain Research and its Implications for Education

____ Effective Schools Materials

____ Curriculum Development and Program Development for Specific Subject Areas: (Rank order)

Reading ___ Science ___ Thinking Skills ___ English ___ Social Science ___ Math ___ Study Skills ___ Other ___

____ Strategies for Planning and Implementing Effective Parent Conferences

____ Effective Stress Management Techniques

____ Interpersonal Communication Techniques

____ Instructional Theory into Practice (ITIP)

____ Assertive Discipline

____ Thinking Processes/Skills

Study Skills Materials

___ Emotional Levels/Developmental Learning Stages

___ Cooperative Programs with SWOCC and Local Districts

____ Other Programs that might be of interest (please list)

11. If you have any additional comments of questions, please share them with us.

PLEASE RETURN TO JIM DESMET AT BUNKER HILL SCHOOL BEFORE AUGUST 31, 1988.

APPENDIX B

SURVEY RESULTS



ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE SUPERINTENDENT

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The ACTS Committee has been formed for the purpose of identifying areas of focus for Coos Bay school programs during the 1988-89 school year. We are asking for your cooperation and assistance in helping with this identification process which will provide an opportunity for your input on staff and program development/improvement.

Please circle the appropriate response:

1. Position: K-5 Teacher 53/92 responded
   K-5 Administrator 4/6 responded
2. Grade Level Working With: _____
3. How many inservice opportunities did you have in the last year?
   1-3: 37 4-6: 11 several: 5
4. Given a choice of times, the most productive time schedule for future inservice activities would be:
   a. evening 16 b. weekend workshops 5 c. series of after school meetings 29 d. week-long summer session 3 e. basic summer session 0
5. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) credit should be offered for time spent in inservice activities to those who desire it whenever

possible:

YES 47 NO 2 UNDECIDED 4

6. Inservice workshops should be aimed at developing the teacher's role as a professional: i.e., coping with stress, time management, interpersonal communications, etc.

YES 42 NO 2 UNDECIDED 9

7. Inservice workshops should be aimed primarily at developing teacher skills as they directly apply to classroom/school activities/communication with parents.

YES 35 NO 4 UNDECIDED 14

8. I definitely would be interested in a workshop concerning the State's newly developed Essential Learning Skills concepts and ways to implement them effectively in the classroom.

YES 26 NO 9 UNDECIDED 18

9. I definitely would be interested in a workshop concerning more effective parent-teacher conferences/communication skills/conflict resolution.

YES 36 NO 6 UNDECIDED 11

10. Please rate your interest in inservice activities on the following topics:

a. not at all b. not very interested c. some interest d. interested e. very interested

46* Behavior Management for Students

33 How to interpret Diagnostic Testing and Student File information

42 Legislative Issues and Legal Aspects of Education

24 Curriculum Ideas for Talented and Gifted Students

32 Brain Research and its Implications for Education

* Number equals combined total of responses marked c.d or e.

32 Effective Schools Materials

34 Curriculum Development and Program Development for Specific Subject Areas: (Rank order)

Reading 3 Science 4 Thinking Skills 1 English 5 Social Science 5 Math 5 Study Skills 2 Other ___

46 Strategies for Planning and Implementing Effective Parent Conferences

43 Effective Stress Management Techniques

49 Interpersonal Communication Techniques

28 Instructional Theory into Practice (ITIP)

30 Assertive Discipline

40 Thinking Processes/Skills

33 Study Skills Materials

40 Emotional Levels/Developmental Learning Stages

41 Cooperative Programs with SWOCC and Local Districts

X Other Programs that might be of interest (please list)

11. If you have any additional comments of questions, please share them with us.

PLEASE RETURN TO JIM DESMET AT BUNKER HILL SCHOOL BEFORE AUGUST 31, 1988.

Appendix C

# CONFERENCE DAY !!

PREPARATION FORM

**TEACHERS**

---

Student: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian: _____ Time: _____

Conference Objectives: _____

_____

_____

____ Conference Questionnaire from Parent

____ Student File including Standardized Tests

____ Sample of Work by Subject Area:

___ Reading ___ Math ___ Language ___ Handwriting

___ Social Studies ___ Science ___ Health ___ Art

___ Computer ___ Physical Education ___ Music

____ Documentation of "Goal Area"

____ Class Procedure

____ Latest Class Newsletter

____ Class Rules or Guidelines

____ Positive Statement Prepared:

____ Plan of Action Including Home Involvement

____ Time Allowed for parent's concern, questions/problems

Resource Materials

Behavior Contract Form

## APPENDIX D

## PARENT INPUT FORM

# CONFERENCE DAY

PREPARATION FORM

**PARENT**

Conference Day is rapidly approaching. In order to have the conference time used most beneficially kindly answer the following questions.

1. Has the school year been a positive learning experience for your child this year? Why or why not?

_____

_____

2. Do you have any special concerns about your child's social development? If so, please explain.

_____

_____

_____

3. Do you have any concerns about your child's academic development? If so, please explain.

_____

_____

4. Do you have any questions about the school or classroom procedures? _____

_____

5. Perhaps you have other questions. Please make a list of your most important concerns. _____

_____

_____

Kindly send the information back to school at least two days prior to the scheduled conference.

Thanks for your assistance.

Appendix E

ROADBLOCKS

TO

COMMUNICATION

1. ORDERING, DIRECTING, COMMANDING
2. WARNING, THREATENING
3. PREACHING, MORALIZING
4. ADVISING
5. JUDGING, CRITICIZING, BLAMING
6. NAME CALLING, RIDICULING, SHAMING
7. INTERPRETING, PSYCHOANALYZING
8. TEACHING, INSTRUCTING

APPENDIX F

## CHECKLIST FOR COMMUNICATION SKILLS

No one is perfect. All of us are trying to improve our skills. The checklist is a way of helping us measure our progress.

I. Listener's Body Language

| + | - |
|---|---|
| ___ uses affirmative head nods | ___ face rigid |
| ___ calm, yet expressive face | ___ stares blankly |
| ___ direct eye contact | ___ looks away while others are talking |
| ___ body turned toward speaker | ___ extraneous face movements |
| ___ comfortable spacial distance | ___ body too close or too far from speaker |
| ___ body relaxed and comfortable, yet alert | ___ body rigid, tense |

II. Listener's Understanding of Talker's Message

A. ___ Ideas of talker identified accurately

B. ___ Feelings of talker identified accurately (content)

III. Listener's Use of Facilitative Listening Skills

| + | - |
|---|---|
| ___ open questions | ___ closed (yes/no) questions |
| ___ clarifying | ___ interpreting, analyzing |
| ___ reflecting | ___ giving advice |
| ___ understanding | ___ judging, criticizing |
| ___ summarizing | ___ directing, ordering |

I MESSAGES — YOU MESSAGES

Appendix G

Teacher Effectiveness in Parent Conferences

A Self-Rating Questionnaire

Please circle the number which indicates the degree of your agreement or disagreement with the statements. Circle number one (1) if you completely disagree. Circle number seven (7) if you completely agree.

1. I have sufficient understanding of preconference planning skills.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2. I have been given sufficient training for conducting effective parent conferences.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3. I know how to avoid roadblocks to communication.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4. I know effective strategies to cope with difficult people.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5. I know and use facilitative communication techniques during parent conferences.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

6. I am familiar with and can accommodate the characteristics of the adult learner.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

7. I know and use conflict resolution strategies as appropriate in parent conferences.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Appendix H

Parent-Teacher Role Play/Conference

Observation Feedback Form

Teacher_____ Date_____

Location_____ Observer_____

Role Play_____ Actual Conference_____

Parents present: Father Mother Both

Strategies employed:

Conference Day Planning Sheets: I ____ II ____
Comments:

Communication Skills: Joining ____
Avoids Roadblocks ____ Facilitating ____

Conflict Resolution Skills: Yes ____ No ____
N/A ____

Coping Strategies: Yes ____ No ____ N/A ____

Accommodation to Characteristics of Adult
Learners: Yes ____ No ____ N/A ____

## APPENDIX I



### RESULTS OF TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS QUESTIONNAIRE PRE-TEST

| | | QUESTIONS | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| | 1 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| T | 2 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| E | 3 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 3 |
| A | 4 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 3 |
| C | 5 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| H | 6 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| E | 7 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| R | 8 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| S | 9 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 4 |
| | 10 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| | 11 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| | 12 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 4 |
| | 13 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| | 14 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| | 15 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| | 16 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 3 |
| | 17 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 3 |
| | 18 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| | 19 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |

SCORES

AVERAGE PRETEST SCORES

1. 3.684
2. 2.842
3. 3.263
4. 2.105
5. 3.157
6. 3.105
7. 4.210

## APPENDIX J



### RESULTS OF TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS QUESTIONNAIRE
### POST-TEST

| | | QUESTIONS | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| | 1 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 4 |
| T | 2 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 4 |
| E | 3 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 7 | 7 | 4 |
| A | 4 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 4 |
| C | 5 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 4 |
| H | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 3 |
| E | 7 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 3 |
| R | 8 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 6 |
| S | 9 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 7 |
| | 10 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 6 | 4 |
| | 11 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 3 |
| | 12 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 |
| | 13 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| | 14 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 4 |
| | 15 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 4 |
| | 16 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 3 | 7 | 7 | 4 |
| | 17 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 3 | 7 | 7 | 4 |
| | 18 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 3 |
| | 19 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 4 |
| | | SCORES | | | | | | |

AVERAGE POST-TEST SCORES

1. 6.368
2. 6.052
3. 6.157
4. 4.263
5. 5.684
6. 6.21
7. 4.21